

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, December 11, 2013 — 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.

Tributes.

Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following government motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada, after receiving legal clarity from the Supreme Court of Canada, to consult with all provinces and territories on options for reforming the Senate of Canada.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a strategy to integrate services and reduce barriers to coordinated care for Yukoners living with chronic health conditions.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to assist the Mount Lorne Community Association to replace Mount Lorne's Zamboni machine that has reached the end of its functional life and can no longer be repaired.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Coroner's report re death at Watson Lake hospital

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible has repeatedly avoided our questions about the tragic death of Teresa Scheunert by stating he trusts the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the coroner's office. Yesterday, the family of Ms. Scheunert was told by the Yukon Hospital Corporation that the consultant they hired had found a completely different cause of death than what the coroner found.

The coroner, in her reports, included the finding of a forensic pathologist that Ms. Scheunert's death was caused by mixed drug toxicity. The coroner stated the system had let her down. On the other hand, the consultant hired by the hospital told the family that Ms. Scheunert died of cardiac arrhythmia and he told them that there were no contributing factors by the Hospital Corporation or its staff.

Which of these two contradictory causes does the government believe and does the minister responsible now agree a public inquiry is warranted?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I first of all have to address the prelude to her question that the government has refused to give answers. Mr. Speaker, I have stood up here for the last three or four weeks giving answers to her questions every day. She just turns her questions around and asks them in a different manner the next day — questions that have already been answered.

I assume this is why the coroner has called an inquest. The coroner has called an inquest in order to determine the facts.

I have no doubt that whoever performed the autopsy on behalf of the coroner will be called to testify, and I truly hope that the medical expert hired by the Hospital Corporation to perform the patient safety report is also called to testify at the inquest so that facts may be revealed. That's why a coroner's inquest has been called.

I don't know what other material the member opposite expects me to provide because I'm not a coroner and I'm not a medical practitioner. These things will be established by the coroner's inquest.

Ms. Stick: I do not agree. The public interest and the public safety are not being served by this mixed bag we now have: two different coroner's reports, a hospital consultant's report that is not public and that the family was not allowed to see, two contradictory causes of death, and two, or maybe three, different sets of recommendations. The public has a right to know about the public safety issues in our public health care, not just about this one death.

Based on these contradictory findings, will this government call a public inquiry into the death of Ms. Scheunert?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'm just totally amazed that the member opposite has absolutely no respect for the processes that govern these kinds of things. A coroner's inquest has been called. What could possibly be brought out in a public inquiry that won't be brought out during this coroner's inquest? A jury will be empaneled; a jury will be able to make recommendations once all of the evidence has been heard. It's entirely — I'm trying to think of a parliamentary way to put this, so excuse me for a moment. It's inappropriate for me to make comments about the operations of a particular department within the government.

I trust the coroner to do the right thing. That's why an inquest was called and I trust that all the facts will come out at the coroner's inquest and we'll all understand what happened.

Ms. Stick: The coroner's inquest will only look into the facts of the death. We now have two contradictory ones.

What will not be looked at is disturbance of the body after the death and before the autopsy. These are critical incidents that need to be addressed and will not be in the coroner's inquest. These are questions that we've asked in the interest of public safety, something all Yukoners are concerned about.

It's time for this minister to assume the responsibility of the position he holds. He has repeatedly pointed to the authority of the entities that we now know have contradictory findings. The coroner's report will not be able to address all of these issues. The ultimate responsibility rests with the government.

Will the minister please, finally, put public safety first and call for a public inquiry into the death of Ms. Scheunert?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Evidently the member opposite is prejudging exactly what's going to happen at the coroner's inquest. I understand the member opposite has already made a decision in her own mind that the body was interfered with, based on something I guess she heard on TV. There have been absolutely no facts presented with respect to some of the allegations the member opposite is making.

If that member opposite believes there was some impropriety, or if the family believes there were some improprieties, there are systems in place to handle those kinds of complaints.

If there was an impropriety performed by any medical practitioner in the Watson Lake facility, then I'm sure a complaint to the relevant medical association would determine those facts. But we're not going to prejudice the coroner's inquiry; we're not going to try to usurp the coroner's abilities and responsibilities here. We're going to do what's right; we're going to allow the process to proceed; we're going to allow the coroner's jury to come up with recommendations and, unlike the members opposite, we won't prejudge what is going to happen.

Question re: Economic outlook

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Economic Development recently told this House that the government is doing a study of the Yukon mining sector to find out — and I quote: "...how the supply chain for mining works in the territory and where there are opportunities for increased local involvement." The minister said the government's mining sector study will inform its effort — and I quote: "... to further the impact locally of the mining industry on the territory."

Determining how we can increase the economic impact of key sectors of Yukon's economy is a good idea. Mr. Speaker, what studies is the government doing now on the current, local economic impact of other sectors of the Yukon economy — for example, the tourism and information communication technology sectors?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well some of the studies we've done, because we debated them and discussed them here in the Yukon. We've conducted studies on the information communication technology sector, which resulted in a strategic plan for that

sector — one that we are currently implementing in conjunction with industry organizations like YITIS.

The Department of Tourism and Culture, of course, is engaged with industry to review and consider the impact of that sector of the economy on Yukon's overall economy. We, of course, as she duly noted, are doing studies on the mining industry because that's a fairly important contributor to our economy here in the territory.

So we are engaged in a number of different ways across sectors in our economy to better understand our economy and convey that information to the private sector, so that businesses, as well as government departments and folks within our own government, can make better decisions about what's coming down the path in the future. So for her to suggest that we aren't doing studies — or aren't doing enough studies — I think she's inaccurate. We are quite engaged across the sectors and look forward to continuing that good work.

Ms. Hanson: The minister will recall that he was unable to detail any of the economic multiplier effects of any other sector. The mining sector will always have to deal with the highs and lows of the global mineral commodities market. That's why it makes sense to also promote other sectors that are less prone to boom-and-bust cycles. Tourism is one of those sectors.

We know each tourism dollar spent in the Yukon reaches far beyond individual tourism operators and helps support small businesses and many other sectors, like retail, arts and culture — to name a few. To their credit, the Tourism Industry Association has done some work to demonstrate the contribution of tourism to the Yukon's economy, but the Yukon government has shown little leadership in developing ways to measure and support the impact of tourism to local business.

Will the government commit to doing an economic impact study of the tourism industry in Yukon so that targeted investments can be made to further tourism's positive impact on this economy?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: That's one of the finest examples of rhetoric that I've heard in this House since the two years that I've been sitting in here. The Tourism Industry Association and the tourism industry in Yukon are in very good shape right now. We just need to look at some of the recent information that we have coming forward with the number of visitors that we have coming into the territory — the amount of revenue that it generates for local businesses. Stakeholders in Dawson City providing tours at Dredge No. 4 is just one example. Over one-quarter of all Yukon businesses generate some of their revenue from tourism in our territory, and we just need to look again at the increasing Japanese market.

I have so much information here that completely is the opposite of what the NDP leader is purporting on the floor of this Legislature. I really don't know where she's getting her information from.

Ms. Hanson: In the Yukon, we benefit from a strong local involvement in the tourism sector. We know that dollars

spent in local small businesses have a great multiplier effect, which means it has increased local benefits to the economy. We also know a large part of tourist dollars are directed toward Yukon's many small- and medium-sized businesses. The Minister of Economic Development acknowledges the government could be doing more economic research to find out how government investments can boost the impact of the multiplier effect on Yukon's economy. He also, just as we saw now, deflected the questions back to the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

The Minister of Economic Development has made significant investments in the mining and oil and gas sector, neither of which are his lead. So when will the Minister of Economic Development commit his department to providing comparable resources to the tourism sector?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, just as in the first question, it's almost sad to hear that information coming from the Leader of the NDP, who should know full well from the information that we have provided on the floor of this Legislature just how important, how significant and how successful our tourism industry is in our territory.

We just need to look at the investment that we made on the European trade mission with the Premier and some very significant agreements that were signed overseas that benefit a number of Yukon stakeholders — one of which is Air North and the significant agreement that they signed with Condor Airlines to not only expand upon the shoulder season of visitors coming from Germany, but to increase the ridership and seats on that plane.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe this question at all — the investments that are made in our territory, the investments that this government makes in tourism on a global scale, and investments that, I might add, the NDP and Liberal governments vote against every budget.

Question re: Emergency 911 coverage

Mr. Silver: When will we have Yukon-wide 911 services?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It's unfortunate that members don't recall answers that are given to questions in this House. As I indicated to the Member for Klondike before, this is an area in which we're very interested in working with all of our partners.

I also pointed out to the member the concern that we've heard from some municipal governments, and we are currently waiting for some additional information from Northwestel. We, in fact, are in the process of lining up the exact dates for when there will be recordings in all Yukon communities, which I referred to previously as an interim measure.

As I noted, we have asked Northwestel to come up with a system to allow us, as an interim step, to put in place a system whereby someone dialling 911 in a community not serviced by it will get a recording telling them which numbers they should be calling rather than the current situation where they do not go anywhere with that call. Northwestel has indicated they will proceed with that and we're in the process of

confirming the dates for when that will be tested in Yukon communities.

Mr. Silver: The government often says that if we get a straightforward question, we'll get a straightforward answer. I'm not sure that that's necessarily the case here.

Since 2009, the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs has been trying to get a Yukon Party government to move forward on this safety issue. Our 911 services end just outside of Whitehorse. In rural Yukon there is no 911 service. The fire chiefs put the blame squarely on this government for what they call unacceptable delays. They can't even get the Yukon Party to tell them whether or not the government supports expanding the service.

We know that our Member of Parliament is on board. He wrote a letter in the fall confirming — and I quote: "... my wholehearted support for this proposed project".

Let's just start with that. Is the government committed to 911 services Yukon-wide? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It's amazing that this appears to go right over the Member for Klondike's head. He's coming out with emails that are really quite outdated from earlier this year. I've met with the chair of the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs. I have discussed this process. I've met as well with municipalities and with the Association of Yukon Communities. I pointed out to the member that we've had official concern expressed to us by the Association of Yukon Communities and the president about the potential impacts of 911. We are currently in the process of — we remain very interested in exploring the expansion of 911 services to all Yukon communities.

But the concerns we've heard from municipalities on the effect of dispatch — and the technical issues and potential challenges we've heard from Northwestel about the capacity of phone lines to indeed ensure that calls from communities are not interfered with by other usage of those lines — are things that have to be addressed and worked out. As I've said before, we are very interested in proceeding toward this, but only if it is technically feasible and if the partners that are affected by this are also in agreement that it is an improvement, not a step back. As I noted, the interim step — the 911 recording in communities — is in fact underway and we are currently lining up the dates when that will be tested in Yukon communities.

Mr. Silver: It sounds like we have an "almost maybe" there out of the minister.

Newfoundland is in the midst of setting up a province-wide 911 service. In that province, they put a project manager in place to oversee this work. It is that person's only responsibility. They are not trying to manage this off the side of their desks. The Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs has made the same request here in the Yukon: make it a priority. The stall is at the minister's office. Put the resources into it that are needed to make this happen. So far that wish has been basically ignored by this government.

The question is: will the government dedicate a project manager to this job in order to give it the attention that it deserves?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The only stall going on is on the Liberal express over there. The member does not seem to recognize that his information is very outdated. I have met with the president of the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs. He has my phone number any time he wishes to discuss a matter like this. At our last discussion, he indicated that he agreed that putting in place a 911 recording was a good interim step and also provided his views about how to advance this process. As I've noted previously, we have heard concerns from municipalities, and the Member for Klondike, the Liberal member, dismisses the concerns of Carmacks and other municipalities as being irrelevant.

It's unfortunate that he doesn't give recognition to the concerns we've heard from some of our smaller municipalities, which feel that 911 service at this point in time, based on the information they have, might actually have a negative effect on response times. While I believe that there would be a way to put in place 911—that it is a positive effect—we have to treat those concerns we've heard from mayors and others seriously. We have to hear the information from all of the partner agencies who would be affected by this. Again, Northwestel has to address the technical issues in a manner we're all satisfied with.

I want to thank Northwestel. We made a specific request that we look at recordings in all Yukon communities for 911 and that would list the proper numbers to call, and they are in the process of determining the dates that will be tested.

Question re: CBC coverage

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, I've raised the issue of CBC coverage in the Southern Lakes a number of times in this House and, in particular, the lack of coverage that Tagish receives.

A constituent of mine, Mr. Richard Martin, who had researched various methods of getting CBC coverage for Tagish, was informed by the Minister of Highways and Public Works in a letter dated September 17, 2013 that the department had determined that one of the workarounds that he had proposed was viable and that the Tagish area would have CBC coverage for the fall of 2013.

This November, in a technical briefing, senior department officials stated that CBC would be available by the end of November at the latest. It is December and there is no CBC coverage in Tagish.

Will the minister explain to this House why this is?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, I would like to remind the member of the history of this. The reduction of CBC service to Yukon is something that this government has stood firmly against.

I hear the Leader of the NDP chuckling and chortling off-mic. It appears she doesn't support the work that has been done and is opposed to the April 26, 2012 letter written by the Premier to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, writing to advise him of a motion passed by the Legislative Assembly on April 18, 2012, moved by my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, which read as follows: "THAT this House urges the Government of Canada

to ensure that Yukoners continue to have access to CBC AM Radio and CBC TV by requiring the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to:

"(1) provide AM Radio service by relocating its Whitehorse tower and continuing to broadcast CBC Radio One on the AM 570 band;

"(2) continue to transmit CBC TV in both English and French in Yukon."

So, Mr. Speaker, we have stood steadfast against the reduction of service that was decided by the CBC, which receives over \$1 billion of taxpayers' money per year and is, in my view, failing its duty to serve Yukon regions with the reduction of service and we are taking steps—including work done by Highways and Public Works—to try and do what we can to mitigate those effects.

Mr. Barr: Maybe the Minister of Community Services should get together with the Minister of Highways and Public Works and inform each other of what's been going on in the Tagish area.

Mr. Martin received a telephone call last week in response to this latest query about why there is no CBC coverage as promised. Mr. Martin was told that the latest setback in getting the CBC in Tagish is that the Department of Highways and Public Works now needs to get licensing from CRTC and a frequency signal assigned.

We have moved past the fall, past November, and the new year is fast approaching. When can the minister and the residents of Tagish and the surrounding area expect to have a working CBC signal?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The member opposite is exactly correct. We are waiting to get licensing from the CRTC. It is important for the residents of Tagish, and I have heard this. We have been in communications with Mr. Martin. It takes time to do this stuff and we are working on it. We hope to get it done as soon as possible.

Mr. Barr: Thank you for the response from the Minister of Highways and Public Works, who this is addressed to. Tagish has a permanent population of around 400 and a summer population that is over 1,000. Many citizens rely on CBC, our public broadcaster, to provide information ranging from international news to school bus delays to important weather warnings. I mentioned the importance of CBC coverage last spring and here we have another weather warning—a snowfall advisory. As Mr. Martin notes in his latest letter to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, dated Dec. 5, 2013. "CBC provides an up-to-date and accurate forecast of weather conditions and we are again in winter driving conditions."

What is the minister doing to ensure this is the last setback in getting CBC coverage for Tagish, as the minister promised?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, first of all, I have to point out to the Member for Mount Lorne- Southern Lakes that getting CRTC licensing is not discretionary. It's not something the government has any choice over. We have to comply with the federal regulator's requirements, just like any other potential broadcaster.

As my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, indicated, steps are being taken by his department to try to improve service.

Of course, there are other radio stations that are available. I believe they are available in Tagish. There are also other sources of information, including the Internet. But again, let me remind the member and reiterate the work that this government has done including getting the permission of the City of Whitehorse to extend the lease for the CBC's AM tower in Whitehorse by three years. That of course did run out, but we have strongly encouraged the federal government — we've expressed this government's opposition to CBC reducing its service and to ceasing AM service in the Yukon, including a motion moved by my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake.

It read: "THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to ensure that Yukoners continue to have access to CBC AM Radio and CBC TV by requiring the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to:

"(1) provide AM Radio service by relocating its Whitehorse tower and continuing to broadcast CBC Radio One on the AM 570 band; and

"(2) continue to transmit CBC TV in both English and French in Yukon."

The Premier wrote that letter indicating the motion was passed to the Minister of Heritage expressing our opposition —

Speaker: Order please. The member's time has elapsed.

Question re: Teacher staffing

Mr. Tredger: When there are vacancies inside the Department of Education, and where it is appropriate, the department fills those positions with teachers reassigned or "seconded" from our schools. I noted last spring that the Department of Education was looking at limiting secondments to three years. I also asked how many teachers are currently seconded into the Department of Education and how many of those secondments have been longer than three years. The previous Minister of Education stated that he did not have that level of detail, but he committed to getting back to this House at a later date.

Can the Minister of Education tell this House how many teachers are currently seconded into the Department of Education and how many of those secondments have been longer than three years?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, no, I don't have that information at my fingertips, as you can appreciate. This is the first that I've heard this specific question coming from the member opposite. I do not have those particular statistics at hand and the member, I'm sure, can appreciate that it is with the Department of Education; it is with the administrative level. I commend the department for their ongoing work in support of all of our administrators and teaching professionals.

Mr. Tredger: Temporary teachers are brought in to back-fill the vacancies in our schools created by the secondment to the department. Temporary teachers are also

used to fill vacancies that are too long for substitute teachers. Examples include parental leave, extended leave for long-term medical and disability reasons.

Can the Minister of Education tell this House how many temporary teachers are currently employed to fill vacant positions in Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Unfortunately, the answer is not going to change. I don't have that information at my fingertips. I'm certainly sure that members opposite can appreciate that fine level of detail. Of course, we will have an opportunity to debate more fully the Department of Education when we get into Committee of the Whole.

I'm very proud of the supplementary budget, which includes additional dollars for the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, for example, and the new mobile trades trailer that we just launched at Yukon College earlier today. These are all investments in support of education and in support of our student learners throughout the territory and in support of our teaching professionals.

I look forward to debating this and other subjects of importance to members opposite when we get into Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Tredger: Temporary teachers are obviously a necessity. Temporary teachers come into new schools and into new communities, and they rise to the challenge. However, it is hard for temporary teachers to set down roots. They have no guarantee of permanent status. Getting even simple things, like a mortgage, can be difficult because they are not permanent. Many of these teachers end up looking for permanent positions outside of the Yukon. This lack of permanence is not good for temporary teachers, for the communities they live in, for the schools they serve, or especially for the children they work with.

What is this government's plan to move away from a reliance on temporary teachers and establish more permanent positions to strengthen our schools and our communities?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: What this government will continue to do is invest in our own Yukon citizens. The Yukon Native Teacher Education Program is but one example of this government's investment in Yukon College that has helped to facilitate many First Nation and non-First Nation students to come into the communities and within the City of Whitehorse to teach in their respective communities.

Again, this government will continue to invest millions of dollars in support of our educators and in support of all our support staff housed within the Department of Education. We will continue to work in collaboration and partnership with all our respective agents — First Nation governments, the Yukon Teachers Association, communities and so forth.

We look forward to debating the Department of Education in Committee of the Whole and talking to these very issues.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

Clerk: Motion No. 500, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Watson Lake:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to adjust its travel booking systems to allow federal government employees the option of using northern carriers when they travel to the North.

Ms. McLeod: It gives me great pleasure today to rise and speak on behalf of this motion.

You may recall that I have, on several occasions, noted the importance of northern communities having scheduled air service. My home community of Watson Lake did have scheduled service some years ago, and the loss of that service is felt every day.

I, and likely every Yukoner and visitor, certainly enjoy the benefit of reduced-fare air travel. I can remember when the cost of a return flight to Vancouver was over \$1,000. So the importance of northern air carriers is very important.

In April of 2013, the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications issued a report entitled, *One Size Doesn't Fit All: The Future Growth and Competitiveness of Canadian Air Travel*. One of the central findings of the committee was that Canada needs a national air travel strategy that takes into account specific needs and challenges of different regions, including the north.

The report discussed many of the particularities of the north's airline industry. Specifically, it identified the essential service that air carriers provide to isolated communities. It also discussed the small size of the northern market and acknowledged that this small size renders competition, in many cases, impractical.

The importance of northern air carriers extends beyond the service they provide to remote communities. Northern carriers have a positive impact on the northern economy. The service they provide makes communities more accessible and ultimately increases the possibility of investment.

In addition, carriers that retain their base operations in the north create jobs, contribute to the GDP and tax revenues, and provide private sector investment opportunities for First Nations and other northern residents alike.

In Yukon, the impact of Air North, Yukon's airline, on the economy is clear. Air North directly employs over 200 people in the territory. This represents almost two percent of the private sector workforce and contributes almost two percent of private sector income tax revenues.

The direct impact of the airline on Yukon's economy in 2011 was \$57 million, which is equivalent to almost four percent of the territorial GDP. The airline's total direct and indirect impact was \$76 million, or five percent of the Yukon's GDP. Air North is 100-percent owned by Yukoners. This includes almost 2,000 Yukon shareholders as well as a 49-percent interest held by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

The costs associated with basing operations and flying in the north are generally higher than their equivalents in the rest of the country. This is due to a combination of factors, primarily the vastness of the north and the small size of the market. The north represents about 40 percent of Canada's landmass and about 0.3 percent of its population, and it accounts for only one percent of Canada's passenger air traffic. There are approximately 65 communities in northern Canada that receive scheduled air service. Only eight of those communities are served by jet aircraft. Only 10 of those communities have paved runways.

Air service to small rural communities is particularly costly, yet it is a service most northerners would consider essential. In order to provide this service at an affordable price, northern carriers rely to a large degree on revenues earned from cheaper and more frequently travelled gateway routes between larger northern cities and southern hubs.

To a degree, this careful balance between gateway and rural regional service has been upset by the influx of competition from non-northern, mainline carriers into the northern gateway travel markets. Given the small size of these northern markets, an increase in competition has often meant that no single carrier is able to maintain enough market share and revenues to help outweigh costs. This has resulted in net losses across the board.

Mainline carriers can usually sustain such losses, as they are able to account for them with revenues earned from southern routes. Northern carriers, however, cannot. They depend on gateway revenues to offset the high cost of regional service.

This is not to say that competition is never beneficial to the northern air travel market. For example, in 2001, Whitehorse was a monopoly market.

The mainline air carrier serving Whitehorse was charging, on average, more than \$300 per seat for travel to Vancouver. That was with fuel costs of about 55 cents per litre. This year, with three air carriers in the market and with fuel costs of more than 90 cents a litre, travel costs between Whitehorse and Vancouver are averaging about \$185. The introduction of competition in some areas has served to make travel to, from and within the north more affordable for both residents and visitors. It has also increased travel. During the past 13 years, air traffic within the Whitehorse market has more than doubled as lower airfares have allowed more people to travel and allowed them to travel more often.

For residents, this is a tremendous benefit, especially as so many of us have friends and family in other parts of the country or the world. For visitors, lower travel costs make the north a more affordable destination, broadening the spectrum of visitors and tourists who head north each year. For businesses, lower travel costs free up assets for other purposes and add to Yukon's overall attractiveness as a place to invest and operate.

Competition clearly has its benefits, but this is not always the case. There are nuances to the laws of supply and demand as they apply to the north, especially in the air travel industry. The Yellowknife market exemplifies some of these pitfalls.

Yellowknife was the first northern market to catch the eye of mainline carriers. Until 2006, Yellowknife was served by Canadian North and First Air. Air Canada entered the market in 2006. When WestJet first entered the market in 2009, there were plenty of airfares between Yellowknife and Edmonton below \$100 and plenty of flight options between the four carriers.

But the situation was not sustainable. Since then, both northern carriers have had to reduce the number of flights they offer and some northern jobs have been lost and airfares have gone up. Despite the challenges they face, northern carriers are resilient. Many of them have found creative ways to keep costs low in order to continue offering affordable fares.

I did some research yesterday into comparative airfares that I'd like to share with the House, although I must emphasize that this is certainly not the result of rigorous scientific testing. My methodology was about as complex as typing a few words into a search bar. I ran a search yesterday for prices from Whitehorse to Vancouver for a flight leaving Whitehorse May 21 and returning May 28. I choose May, as that is when WestJet resumes its seasonal service. The total fare with Air Canada cost \$444.41. The total fare with WestJet cost \$444.41 — I'm a little suspicious in the closeness of their numbers. The total fare with Air North was \$370.91 — over \$70 in savings. This goes to show that the main challenge for northern carriers is not competing with mainline carriers on price. Their main challenge is a growing market share and this is no easy task.

Mainline carriers have access to greater resources for marketing and advertising, ensuring their brands are more recognizable. In addition, mainline carriers provide connecting service to more destinations within the country, meaning customers can utilize a single airline when travelling. Travelling with a single carrier often appears beneficial in terms of price and convenience.

Again, that is not always the case. There are bigger economic disadvantages to bypassing northern carriers. Northern private sectors are quite small and, as a result, one northern air carrier's positive or negative performance can have a significant impact on jobs, tax revenues and GDP. Any time a customer selects a mainline carrier for a route that is also serviced by a northern equivalent, the north's economy suffers a loss. The accumulation of these losses in the northern air transport industry can result — and has already resulted — in a net negative impact on northern economic development. This outcome is counterproductive to the shared goal of the northern territories and the federal government to foster economic development in the north, especially private sector growth. Local air carriers are an integral part of the northern private sector. Their success has positive implications for the broader northern economy.

In turn, the success of the northern economy benefits Canada by enabling the territories to become increasingly economically independent. Currently, significant federal resources flow into the territories to bolster economies that local private sectors are unable to uphold, yet the north has the economic potential to change that.

The Yukon, along with the two other territories, has the potential to augment its private sector and become a contributing member to the Canadian economy. The benefits to the rest of Canada would be far-reaching. For this reason, actions to support the northern private sector are in the best interest of the entire federation.

Aside from strengthening Canada's sovereignty in the north by expanding institutions and populations, a strong northern economy would enable the territories to become increasingly self-sufficient. Air carriers are only one element of that economy, but they are an important one and have the potential to remain as such in the future.

It's not only logic that lends itself to this motion. Supporting northern economic development, as this motion proposes to do, is built into federal policy. The 2008 Speech from the Throne identified Canada's north as the cornerstone of the federal government's agenda. This speech set the framework for Canada's northern strategy.

The following is a quote from the Government of Canada's document, *Canada's Northern Strategy — Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future*.

"Canada is a northern nation... We have a clear vision for the North and are working to ensure the region achieves its rightful place within a strong and sovereign Canada... We are achieving this vision by delivering an integrated Northern Strategy based on four equally important and mutually reinforcing priorities: Exercising our Arctic Sovereignty; Promoting Social and Economic Development; Protecting our Environmental Heritage; Improving and Devolving Northern Governance."

It's clear from this excerpt how central the federal government considers northern economic development to the overall prosperity of the nation. The centrality of the north to federal policy is similarly apparent in the mandates of the two federal agencies specifically dedicated to northern development: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, or AANDC, and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, or CanNor.

According to AANDC's website, the agency is specifically mandated to support "Aboriginal people (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) and Northerners in their efforts to: improve social well-being and economic prosperity; develop healthier, more-self-sufficient communities; and participate more fully in Canada's political, social and economic development — to the benefit of all Canadians."

CanNor's mandate echoes this sentiment. The following is an excerpt from CanNor's website: "CanNor is a tangible acknowledgement that the federal government places the North higher on its agenda than ever before. Its objective is to help provide the foundation for a prosperous economic future for those who live, work and support their families in the North. Strengthening economic activity in the North will broaden the economic base of each territory, improving Northerners' ability to take advantage of economic opportunity and increasing coordination among economic partners and programs."

As both mandate statements exemplify, these agencies are mandated to support the northern economy. This includes an inherent mandate to support northern air carriers, given their vital role within that northern economy.

To be clear, this motion does not support preferential treatment for northern carriers, nor does it support a restriction on competition. It supports an even playing field. As I mentioned previously, northern carriers have been quite successful in competing with mainline carriers on price. They do not need preferential treatment, nor have they asked for it.

However, federal travel booking systems are currently not level or fair. On these systems, federal employees booking trips to the north generally do not see flights with northern carriers. They see only flights with mainline carriers integrated into the system. This has a negative effect on northern carriers because federal and other government employees comprise a significant portion of the customers flying to the north.

Because of current limitations on the federal booking system, northern carriers are unable to compete fairly for that group's business. The irony is that many of the federal employees travelling to the north are AANDC and CanNor employees — the two agencies specifically mandated to support northern economic development.

Amending the federal booking systems to make flights with northern carriers available should not require a significant amount of effort, nor resources, on the part of the federal government. It's a small fix that will address a big problem for northern carriers.

I urge all members to support this motion. I believe all members understand the importance of northern air carriers to the north — not only the role they play in strengthening the northern economy, but their role in making northern communities more accessible.

Northern air carriers create jobs, contribute to tax revenues and GDP, and allow for the flow of people to and from the north — be it family members looking to reconnect, tourists looking to explore, or businesses looking to invest.

I look forward to hearing other members' comments with regard to this motion, and I sincerely hope all members will join me in voting in support of it.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion. There is absolutely no reason why any member in this Legislative Assembly would not support this motion to urge the Government of Canada to adjust its travel booking systems to allow the federal government employees the option of using northern carriers when they travel to the north.

I speak to this from some experience. I actually made some phone calls today to follow up on where we are at these days.

When I left my career with the federal public service, I had been chair of the federal council, which was the head of federal departments and agencies in the Yukon, for a number of years. In fact, this is an issue that we were working on at that time.

I believe that there have been some minor improvements, but it still is very frustrating. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that speaking to some of the public servants who deal with this, it is frustrating.

We need to keep in mind as we speak to this, that — first of all, I'll go back a bit. I think that it is clear that the Yukon New Democratic Party, the Official Opposition, has for sure supported, by our actions when we were in government, the development and support of local businesses.

I think it's important to recognize that it was the small business investment tax credit that was put in place by an NDP government that allowed Yukoners to reduce their income tax as eligible investors in businesses like Air North. I'd be interested, by a show of hands, how many members of this Legislative Assembly are shareholders. I know there are two on this side of the House. Good, we've got one — that's great. So we have three — three out of 2,000. That's pretty good. Maybe there are four — I didn't see the hand go out. Sorry, no, not him. So, there are three of us of 2,000.

So the NDP does believe in putting our money where our mouth is and we will continue to do that. The issue with respect to the support for northern carriers and particularly Air North — I, too, like the Member for Watson Lake, can recall travelling in the old days. When you travelled from Ottawa to Yukon, you could circumnavigate the whole north. You could go via Churchill to Yellowknife to God-knows-where and then back to Whitehorse. Or else you would be coming up through Fort St. John and Watson Lake and Whitehorse. So there were many ways that we got here — all at great expense.

The partnership that was created through the work of the leadership at both the Vuntut Gwitchin Development Corporation and Air North is an exemplary example of why the two private sector arms — the private sector in the business world and the private sector within the First Nation community — can and do contribute so much to this territory.

As the Member for Watson Lake referenced, it is Canada's northern strategy and the fact that we now have a regional economic development minister for the north — one would think that having a regional minister of economic development who actually comes from the north, she would be a great champion of making the changes necessary at the Cabinet table to ensure that the travel directives are clear with respect to how travel is, what rules govern public servants and their ability to travel to the north using a regional carrier. I can tell you that as the director general in the north here and other federal departments — I was told today that the one that she referenced is now called AAND-something-or-other — Aboriginal Affairs — they were the last holdout with respect to making travel arrangements using travel agents locally as opposed to using what's called Travel AcXess Voyage. It is a centralized travel program that public servants are supposed to use.

We tried for many years to try to provide, through our limited means as a federal council, information to federal departments and agencies about the benefits of flying through Air North — to not just support a local carrier but also to provide them with more direct routes, in many cases.

We have CanNor and a regional economic development minister from the north who sits at the Cabinet table. We have a senator who is a Conservative member of the Senate. We have a Conservative Member of Parliament. You would think that the Yukon Party, with their good alliance with them, would have a sound voice, a sound hearing, to be able to make the changes and make the case where others have not been able to. There are a couple of mechanisms that I think we might want to encourage all three of those people — including the former Speaker, who now occupies a political advisory role to the minister for regional economic development with offices here in Whitehorse — there are a number of ways that we could, as members of this Legislative Assembly, work to try to encourage some of the work that needs to get done, because I think there's an opportunity here.

The current arrangements that are in place with Travel AcXess Voyage — the Canadian government arranges all travel through one entity.

There is a contracting process and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. So Minister Clement — if somebody here, perhaps, or our senator or MP, or the CanNor minister for economic development would have an opportunity to talk with them as Travel AcXess Voyage, which is currently run by American Express. So all travel that federal public servants undertake is done through the auspices of American Express. That will be taken over, starting in the spring, by the Bank of Montreal credit card firm.

Now here's an opportunity perhaps. Here's an opportunity to do a couple of things. One is to work with the National Joint Council. "The National Joint Council of the Public Service of Canada is the Forum...for co-development, consultation and information sharing between the government as employer and public service bargaining agents."

I bring this up because it is the entity that the Government of Canada employs to establish the parties' work together. I'll just read directly from their website, because having met and having had the opportunity to have the National Joint Council meet here in Whitehorse, it is a critical lynchpin in this process. So they "...work together to resolve problems and establish terms of employment..." as well as deal with joint issues with respect to "...government travel..." and a whole bunch of other things.

So it's the government travel issue and the determination and establishment of travel directives that are governed by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat that effectively open up the opportunity for us in making this motion to urge the Government of Canada to make sure that the terms of the next contract with the service provider that will be taking over Travel AcXess Voyage — the Bank of Montreal — that they have, as part of their criteria and requirements, support for northern carriers.

This not just as an option, but put in as Air North being listed as one of the carriers. Currently, when someone is making a booking through Travel AcXess Voyage, it doesn't show up. You can't do it on-line, which is how it's done for the travel people in a government department — they would do it on-line — but if they're trying to book Air North through

Travel AcXess Voyage, they won't get it. They must do a separate telephone call to a 1-800 number and that seems to be an impediment.

There are a couple of issues here. One is that there appears to be a cost to the carrier for being carried by Travel AcXess Voyage and that's something that I think that we should, as legislators, convey to the minister responsible for CanNor. If that is an impediment to having a regional carrier having access, maybe that's a reasonable suggestion that it not be put there as an impediment to a regional northern carrier.

The issue right now is that there they are not on the system. It's a 1-800 number to get them on. We have a contract that is changing hands from American Express to the Bank of Montreal. It seems like a fairly simple fix to me to suggest to all of those people in the contact list that the Yukon government has — who are currently in government — to effect that change so that it's not just by our words, but by our actions so they can see the change that would see the objective that the Member for Watson Lake has articulated, which is to provide an opportunity for greater access to the travel dollars that have in the past been quite significant with respect to federal public servants travelling in and to the north.

There is an irony here, and it's an irony that should not be overlooked. In fact, in the last year or two years in some federal departments, travel budgets have been cut up to 70 percent — seven-zero percent. It's part of the cuts that we've attempted to debate many times in this Legislative Assembly in terms of the implications and the impact on economies. It's not just public servants who lose their jobs who then lose the ability to live in small communities and contribute to the economy. But we are also seeing budget cuts that have seen budgets for travel cut up to 70 percent. So it may be a pyrrhic victory. We may win the battle of having the ability for federal public servants to travel on Air North, because it's considered and included in the system as a carrier that automatically shows in terms of linkages for Travel AcXess Voyage through the collaborative efforts of the National Joint Council and then the Treasury Board Secretariat building that into the criteria for the travel arrangements.

But wouldn't it be ironic if we have very few public servants being able to travel here because it now requires a number of departments — not just director or director general approval — but it requires DM approval to travel out of Ottawa? In a government that has become much more constrained and controlling — not in a good way, I would suggest — the ability of public servants to even come here is under question.

So of course the Official Opposition will and does support the notion that the Government of Canada — not that we urge them, but we would really request them. I would suggest that, at some point, we should be looking at ways of conveying this. I would assume for a moment here that there would be nobody in this House who would speak against the notion that we would like to see the federal travel booking system to allow federal government employees the option of using northern carriers when they travel in the north. I don't think there would be anybody who could reasonably be

expected to argue against that. I'd like to suggest — and I'm not sure if it's the place here — that at some point, perhaps it could be an addendum to the motion the member across the way put forward this afternoon.

We also talk about: what do we do with this motion? We can stand here and say, this is great. We think, for these reasons — perhaps then what we should do is follow it up. Perhaps what we should be doing is saying, okay, we had unanimous agreement on a motion here today to urge the federal government to amend or adjust its travel booking system to allow federal government employees the option of using northern carriers. Perhaps then we should be urging or directing the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, on our behalf, to convey that message to the Government of Canada, probably through to the minister responsible for regional economic development to CanNor.

I raise that because recently we didn't get to debate on a motion I thought was interesting, because it had to do with what the views of the members of this Legislative Assembly were with respect to abolition of the Senate. We proposed debating that motion last week because — not just because of the integral importance of the issue with respect to that institution, but because of what I saw happening across the country, particularly in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In those two legislative assemblies, when they debated that motion and when they came to an agreement in their legislative assemblies that they agreed that the federal government should take a course of action, they then rose and put forward a motion to their legislative assemblies directing the speaker to convey what the motion was to the Government of Canada.

I would think that's something that this Legislative Assembly could consider doing, because then it doesn't just go into a vacuum. We don't just waste an afternoon here of just talk. Then we would have actually taken it to the next step and said to somebody somewhere who has a responsibility for whatever we've urged. In this case, we are urging the Government of Canada, and in this case the regional economic development minister, who is the government's sort of presence in the north.

There could be some debate whether it should be the minister responsible for Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. I would argue that it should be the minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. I just like to think that when we do this and come to an agreement on an issue, we should let somebody know about it.

Of course, as the Leader of the Official Opposition, I'm happy to support this motion. I just raised that latter point with respect to what happens to it next. I look forward to moving through the debate so that we can move to a vote on this.

Mr. Silver: I'll be very brief. I'm very happy to rise and speak on Motion No. 500. I will absolutely be happy to support this motion. My understanding is that federal government employees can purchase flights with northern carriers, just not through the booking system. The employees would have to purchase the tickets on their own and then be reimbursed for them through an administrative process. This

process creates an unhappy barrier in encouraging the use of northern carriers and as such, I would be very happy to support this motion.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It is a pleasure to rise and speak to this motion put forward by the Member for Watson Lake. I'd like to address a number of issues related to it. I will eventually circle around to a response to some of the questions and issues put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition. I have to say, in general, I'm in agreement with a lot of things she said, which doesn't occur frequently in this House. It's good to identify an issue that, for the most part, we can agree on.

When I come toward the conclusion of my remarks, I'll speak a little bit about what we will do with this motion. Actually, I might as well do that right now.

What we've done previously with motions that are passed in this House that urge us to either urge the government or urge other governments to do something or other is we will usually write a letter and convey that particular motion and the context of it to the individual, the government or the group, or whatever it may be, for them to take into consideration.

I can think of a number of different examples where we've done that, and they're typically done by a letter from the respective minister whose general responsibility it might relate to. For instance, when we passed a motion related to the seal hunt this sitting, I took the liberty, as Minister of Environment, of forwarding it to the federal Minister of the Environment, who is also the Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. That's a fairly normal course of action for us as ministers — to take deliberations of this House that we see as being relevant, or motions that we see as being relevant, and forwarding them along to the respective parties who need to be aware of them.

That is something that will likely happen with this motion, should it be eventually passed. It's my hope, of course, that it will be unanimously supported and that it will, in and of itself, send a unanimous voice to, in this case, Ottawa that this is an issue and something that the Yukon Legislature and all legislators support and took the time to discuss, debate and eventually come to a vote, or conclusion, on and forward it along.

To begin my comments, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to speak a little bit about why this is important. As we've debated and discussed in this House previously, the last few years have been fairly interesting times for the aviation industry in the north. Of course, we do tend to focus on Air North as the particular focus, because they are the jet service that we all frequently travel by and it garners a significant amount of our attention.

But there are a number of other aviation businesses in this territory that do deserve comment and discussion, but perhaps we'll have to save that for another debate, another day.

I do believe that the aviation industry is critical to the north, whether it's in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories or Nunavut, or even the provincial norths in the provinces to the south. The north is an area that obviously has tremendous

potential and, for those of us in this House, a great deal of personal connection as we are residents of this area.

It certainly has a lot of potential as well — economic and otherwise. I think that aviation has been and will continue to be a critical component of that development and that economy. The reason is that, because we are so large and so sparsely populated, air travel is one of the best ways for us to stay connected with others in the north.

I would think that aviation is perhaps an under-recognized and under-valued contributor to northern economies because we consider it so regular or everyday — it's an everyday part of our lives — and we often don't recognize it for what it is, and that is a considerable component and contributor to our economy.

During 2009, northern air carriers transported more than 830,000 passengers and almost 150-million pounds of cargo from, to, and within the north. Additionally, northern carriers account for almost 1,700 jobs across the territories, more than \$76 million in annual territorial payrolls across the territories, more than \$1 million in territorial property and business taxes, and more than \$50 million in annual, non-payroll spending with hundreds of local businesses in the three territories.

The direct economic impact of northern aviation also provides many multiples of its value in indirect economic benefits to the territories, including payroll and income taxes.

I would note that right here in Yukon — as I said, we don't want to overly focus on Air North, but I think this is the relevant discussion — Air North is one of our largest private sector employers. They are obviously in the aviation sector, but it would be impossible to consider Air North without considering their impact on the tourism industry as well. They are often the vehicle by which tourists from outside of our territory come to the Yukon. It's also impossible to consider Air North without considering the impact on the mining industry as so many products, workers and supplies related to the mining industry enter the Yukon and leave the Yukon on Air North.

There is really no industry that I can think of that isn't affected at all by air travel and aviation. Aviation is a product that everybody in the north uses. An affordable and efficient aviation network benefits both residents and visitors, and the presence of a transportation hub in any region will provide a significant number of permanent year-round jobs in that region.

The economic benefits that accrue from a transportation infrastructure hub are significant and may be illustrated by looking right here at the Yukon Territory with what we have established here in Whitehorse with Air North. As I said before, it's obviously a significant contributor to our local economy here in Yukon through jobs, through pay, through service and supply and through a whole host of other ways as well.

Over the past several years, we've seen the impact of that presence very acutely here in the Yukon. The cost of flying has been reduced over the years significantly. Members have already commented on how far a distance we have come in terms of prices and availability of flights over the years. Now

I think we have probably some of the best flight service, accessibility and affordability than we've ever had in history. A lot of that has to do with the strength of our aviation industry here in Yukon.

As well, as that industry grows and as companies within that sector grow, we see increased services and increased opportunity. We've seen it recently here in Yukon where Air North has reached out to whole new areas that have never previously, as far as I can recall, been accessible by plane from Yukon.

I'm talking about the announcement last year that Air North would be flying on a seasonal basis to Kelowna, which has since been extended to a year-round service, which was announced fairly recently — in the past several months, at least. What that has done is provide a new level of connection between the Yukon and another region in this country, which creates a whole new suite of economic opportunities and linkages between our territory and that region.

Having that direct flight from Whitehorse to Kelowna will absolutely increase the amount of trade, travel and activity between our jurisdictions. That will be a net benefit to our territory for a number of reasons, but especially economically.

The chambers and businesses in this territory have acknowledged that, and we've seen a development of relationships between the Yukon chambers and Whitehorse chambers with chambers in Kelowna and the general Okanagan Valley area. We've seen businesses beginning to explore opportunities for increased relationships on a bilateral basis, and we're seeing more and more Yukoners travel to the Kelowna area and more and more folks from the Kelowna area travel to Yukon. That's a tremendous benefit for us culturally and economically, and it benefits our tourism and other industries very strongly.

More recently, we've seen additional announcements made by Air North that have a northern significance and a national significance. Of course I'm speaking now of the announcement by Air North that they will be providing flights from Whitehorse to Yellowknife and on to Ottawa.

For all of the reasons that I've suggested and for other reasons — some of which were identified by the Leader of the Official Opposition, this makes our discussion today timely. Now with a direct flight from Whitehorse to Ottawa through Yellowknife, there is a new opportunity for individuals, businesses and governments to facilitate travel through that corridor or through that flight connection that have not been available previously.

I know that a number of ministers in the Yukon government and Northwest Territories government are required to make the annual or semi-annual treks to Ottawa for various reasons, some of which we enjoy doing and some we have to do as a result of our responsibilities. But nonetheless, I think all members, ministers and folks who have to travel to Ottawa will agree with me in saying that we were much happier to be flying on Air North to Ottawa than we would be on any of the other mainline carriers. This is not just because of the service and not just because of the comfort

that comes with Air North, but simply because it'll be shorter, it'll be easier and it'll be perhaps more convenient for us.

So that brings me to the motion, which of course is to urge the federal government to adjust its travel booking systems to allow federal employees the option of choosing northern carriers when they come to the north. I think I would like to commend the Member for Watson Lake for keeping it as general as she did, because I'm sure she would have been tempted to say that when they come to the Yukon, they should fly with Air North, but I think it's important that we recognize that this is not simply an issue that's relative to the Yukon.

It's an issue that is very relevant to our neighbours to the east — the other territories. I know that they face similar challenges and face a similar scenario with regard to their aviation industries. I think they will appreciate the fact that we have brought forward a motion of this nature and ultimately, hopefully, pass it.

In addition to making the federal government aware of this motion, I would be happy to convey it as well to my colleagues in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, who will certainly appreciate it and may even consider bringing forward similar motions of their own in their respective legislatures.

The issue related to the travel booking service in Ottawa is one that has both policy and some technical aspects to it. Up until recently, my understanding was that a company like Air North faced technical challenges in synchronizing their systems to allow them to participate in the federal system. That is something that I think hasn't been high on a company like Air North's radar over the years, because they have been occupied in other areas, like flights to Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary and things that are occurring that are more focused in the west.

Now that we have an opportunity with a direct flight from Whitehorse to Ottawa and Yellowknife to Ottawa, I think it increases the viability of Air North benefiting from an increased federal market share. So I think, recognizing that, they have turned their attention to this issue and it is my understanding that the technical issues — either mechanical or software or whatever sort of programming issues they faced — have been settled and that there are no longer any technical barriers to Air North synchronizing their system with the federal booking system. I understand that that issue has been addressed. However, I think there is still a decision that needs to be made by the federal government in Ottawa to open up that system to allow northern carriers like Air North to be seen by employees when booking in that system.

Mr. Speaker, I see you are indicating to me that my time is running out shortly, so I will summarize by saying that what we need now is a policy decision by those in the federal government to allow northern carriers access to that system. To that effect, I took the opportunity to write the Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, the minister responsible for CanNor, earlier this year — a few weeks ago in October. I'll read that letter for members, so that it is on the record.

It says, "Dear Minister Aglukkaq:

"As ministers with northern roots, we are both keenly aware of the critical contributions northern air carriers and the aviation industry make to the territorial economies and to Canada's air transportation network.

"Northern carriers have established themselves as providers of air transportation throughout the north and between territorial capitals and southern gateway cities. This has contributed greatly to northern employment and to the provision of stable and cost-effective service to our communities.

"Our commitment to promoting and facilitating economic growth and development in Yukon parallels CanNor's objective to help provide the foundation for a prosperous economic future for those who live, work and support their families in the North.

"The Government of Yukon acknowledges that air transportation revenues are a key contributor to northern economies and in doing so would like to suggest that your department consider using northern carriers when conducting northern travel and that CanNor promote an equitable use amongst your federal counterparts. We believe that northern air carriers in Yukon offer competitive pricing and service level, but lack access to the federal air travel booking agency.

"I hope that through our continued partnership, we continue to foster the development of a sustainable northern aviation industry that contributes to the health of our northern economies."

That concludes the letter. As you see, we've already raised this issue. I haven't received a response as of yet from the minister, but I look forward to doing so. I'd like to suggest that, in following up on my letter, I would forward along this motion at the end of today's debate — hopefully, a unanimously supported motion — to the federal minister as a follow-up letter to say that not only do I think this, but all members in the Legislature do.

I'd like to highlight one additional thing. As the Member for Watson Lake indicated, this is not about creating a preferential system for northern carriers. This is simply about having fair access for federal employees to see and have the opportunity to book with northern carriers, because I really think that they will. I think that if federal employees are flying to the north — whether they be with Health Canada, Transport Canada, Aboriginal Affairs or CanNor — they would, I think, like the opportunity to fly with Air North for their business and for their government duties to the north.

I think that it's important that we encourage the federal government to acknowledge that and to make the necessary changes to allow for that system to accommodate northern carriers.

Seeing that my time has elapsed, Mr. Speaker, I would conclude by saying a big congratulations to Air North on the announcement they've made that they are now flying to Ottawa and to Yellowknife. I think the connection between Yellowknife and Whitehorse will be greatly appreciated by those of us who have to go to Yellowknife for various business and government duties. I know that the Minister of Highways and Public Works was recently there and

commented that he had to fly down to Vancouver, over to Calgary, then Edmonton, then up to Yellowknife in order to get there. The tragedy of that, of course, is that it's only a short flight when direct.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I think this is a good motion. I look forward to taking it forward and volunteer to write a letter to the minister following up on my previous letter in October, and I look forward to conveying a unanimously supported motion of this nature to the federal minister and hope that she shares it, not only with her department, but with the other necessary departments like the Treasury Board, Transport Canada, Health Canada and others who book and send employees to the north for their government activities.

I would thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this important motion. I think it's an excellent one for us to be discussing today and look forward to voting in support of it.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I commend this motion to the House and look forward to hearing from other members.

Mr. Barr: I, too, rise to speak to the Member for Watson Lake's motion she brought forward today and I am very happy to support this motion.

I think about flying Air North as a northern air carrier over the years and the cost that it used to be just — as we used to say, and still do say — “to get Outside.” The cost that any relatives or family members who would want to come and visit was just prohibitive. I was in attendance at the Air North open house just last week and saw the changes and the growth that has happened for our northern air carrier, Air North. Speaking with Mike Stockstill, the head mechanic — he kind of started right at the humble beginnings of Air North. We used to play some of their Christmas parties together years and years ago — just looking at the gala event of the opening of the holidays and the announcement about flying to Ottawa and to Yellowknife.

Seeing that as the Member for Watson Lake said they don't need a handout — that's not what it's about — they are quite capable of being competitive. However, as far as being on a level playing field — which, as a musician, I know, in being able to have our product be accessible — as the arts industry — there are opportunities that create that level playing field. The Minister for Economic Development spoke about northern air carriers — not just the Yukon but throughout the north — and that this will create the level playing field that would allow, and hopefully encourage, change in the policies of the federal Government of Canada. That is the true intent of this motion.

I am happy that it's left as open as it is to have this come to fruition. I think that, as the Leader of the Official Opposition said, we do take this further — so, if it is suggested that the Speaker moves this forward. I was listening to the Minister of Economic Development state that generally we do that. I would echo what everyone else is saying — that generally we make these motions — that they just don't go out and sit somewhere, that they actually have a life that we intend them to have — from spending the afternoons talking

about them — where they continue on their journey to the ears of those who can actually make the final decisions as to implementing what we speak of here.

I've been proud to be a Yukoner in this Legislature, because we're leading the north by just going forward. It's a really good thing that we can hear a good idea and we can all support that. I think we should do that more often in this House. A good idea — as my father said, “You're doing this and I'm proud of you, but you've got to remember that if it's a good idea, you've got to back that.”

And I believe that. It's a good thing that we can hear something that's good and support that.

I won't take up too much time. I am also happy to hear that the letter has already been drafted, written and sent.

I was over at Air North and they were doing a presentation at lunch time with the chamber, but I had to come back over here. So I'm looking forward to hearing more about what was being discussed as transportation and developments from a perspective of right in the territory itself. As we're hearing that, Dawson Airport will be receiving thousands more folks flying in and out of that airport and there was some mention of something to do with Mayo — so I look forward to hearing about that. The gist of it was that we, as a government, make sure that our airports are in the shape that is necessary — or the infrastructure is in place — so we can accommodate the growth.

As we could probably foresee having the policy changed in the federal government, this will only cause more growth. It will allow for more folks — not only government workers — to go and also create a buzz that it's great to come to visit here. It will spread to the tourism industry the way that I think many of us here in the House — and certainly in my family and friends who say, when you can get a lower fare up here: “You should fly Air North. You should fly Air North.” By way of word of mouth — the moccasin telegraph that we talk about up here — that word can travel Outside and expand in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, so that those northern air carriers can benefit the same way and grow our economy here in the north, right across the north.

They can only benefit by increased opportunities for people that want a northern experience. It only makes sense that this is a great business move. As mentioned, it is also shorter and it's human. It makes our lives living at such a distance and those who live Outside at such a distance to be able to have shorter flight times, less baggage exchange — all the kinds of reasons why it's just a good idea.

I would encourage all the rest of the folks here in the House to vote in favour of this motion and I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I too, rise in support of this motion here today. Before I move to talking about what I'd like to see the federal government do to support northern carriers, I'd like to show how we're doing our part.

My comments today are structured around some themes that I'd like to bring forward. Northern carriers are important to northern communities and northern economies. That

importance is reflected in our Yukon Party platform, "Moving Forward Together."

In the case of Yukon's northern carrier, Air North has faced challenges and has overcome them with, in part, support from the Yukon government. Northern carriers are quality carriers and are recognized as such by other airlines, such as Condor. Northern carriers provide their service using the appropriate aircraft. Northern carriers provide great customer service. Based on that alone, the Government of Canada should adjust its travel booking systems to allow federal government employees the option of using northern carriers when they travel here to the north.

That is my plan for today. To my first point, that northern carriers are important to northern communities and northern economies — that importance is reflected in our platform. In our platform, we spoke to the need for affordable domestic and international air access. Our government wants to ensure that affordable domestic and international air access is fulfilled in the long term.

I want to acknowledge the key role that Air North contributes to the Yukon's social and economic development. This government recognizes the importance that Air North provides to our communities and to our local economy, as well as the importance of maintaining an air transportation hub here in Yukon.

The economic impact of Air North's participation in Yukon's economy is approximately 1.5 to two percent of the total Yukon gross domestic product and, as such, a key contributor in Yukon's economy. Air North's employees are integral members of the Yukon business and social communities. Air North is a great contributor to our economy.

During the recent Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous, Air North as a corporation and the individual employees who so richly gave their time were key contributors to the success of that celebration. Air North's entry and ongoing participation in the marketplace has indeed contributed to significantly lower prices for consumers.

I have constituents in Porter Creek South who have shared with me how much they used to pay for a flight out to Vancouver, Calgary or Edmonton years ago. Before Air North, going south was a much more expensive proposition. So I'm very pleased to encourage the Government of Canada to recognize the quality of service provided by Air North and I'll come back to that in a few moments.

I'd now like to move to my second point which is that Air North has faced challenges and have overcome them with the support, in part, of Yukon government. Our government has consistently stepped forward to offer our assistance. This support reflects our belief in and our commitment to supporting northern carriers.

Given the taxes that northern carriers generate through their operations and the wages they pay their employees, it seems odd to me that they are not able to benefit from the opportunity to provide services to the Government of Canada. I'd like to show that before we asked the federal government to step forward with changes, we addressed those areas within our control. We revisited the Yukon government's own travel

policy to open up the opportunities for our employees when selecting the airline they wished to fly from here to our gateway cities.

Having done that for our employees, I feel comfortable in asking Canada to consider doing the same for their officials. Again, this motion is simply asking for Canada to adjust its policies so northern carriers can compete for their business.

When Air North faced a challenging situation with the competition between Air Canada and WestJet coming to Yukon, our government offered our assistance — when and if needed and requested — to facilitate business-to-business discussions. That is an offer that we have made in the past and that we made again in August and again in September. As I've noted previously, we do this because we believe in our northern carrier.

I'd now like to talk about my third point, which is that northern carriers are quality carriers and are recognized as such by other airlines like Condor. During the Premier's and my trip to Europe — along with 16 Yukon tourism industry representatives — we reached an accord agreement among Yukon government, Air North and Condor to bring more European travellers here to our territory. The accord supports a new air-travel agreement that will allow seamless travel from Europe to Air North's entire flight network, providing increased travel options for European tourists and Yukoners.

It seems odd that while Air North is an option for European tourists, it's not an option for the Government of Canada employees. I'd like to assure those who have not flown with Air North that it is indeed a quality airline. That was also recognized by Condor.

The cooperative accord signed with Condor Airlines and Air North, Yukon's airline, was designed to achieve a number of things. It was designed to increase the number of travellers from Europe to Yukon, as well as maximize the sale of seats on Condor direct flights to Yukon and also to maximize opportunities to provide incremental access to Yukon, achieved through an agreement between Air North, Yukon's airline, and Condor. It was also aimed at increasing the awareness and sale of seats on Condor Airlines and flights that connect with Air North through tour operators and other travel trade partners in Europe.

As the Premier stated, the mission clearly highlights our commitment to working with our local and overseas partners to promote Yukon as a must-see year-round tourism destination. The accord supports a new air-travel agreement that will allow seamless travel from Europe to Air North's entire flight network, providing increased travel options for European tourists and Yukoners, as I mentioned.

This agreement will enable passengers to book flights from Europe to all Air North Yukon destinations in 2014. The agreement will use Air North's entire network to extend service to Yukon from Europe from May to October. This agreement was well-received by nearly everyone. The only negative comments I've heard about the good work done on the European trade mission is from the interim Liberal leader, the MLA for Klondike.

Let's take a look at the comments from Air North's president, Joe Sparling. He said, "From the Air North perspective, the signed cooperative accord between our airline, Condor and the Yukon government is a huge benefit, and the agreement Air North reached with Condor has the potential to be even bigger. Both were greatly facilitated and perhaps even made possible through the efforts of the premier and the minister of tourism, as well as their support staff."

That's high praise indeed. That is one of the stakeholders who made the commitment to participate on that particular mission. We have offered Air North our assistance on a number of occasions and they have taken us up on that offer when they see fit to do so.

Mr. Speaker, did you know that based on the January to October 2013 passenger counts at the Erik Nielsen airport, there were, to that date, 250,940 passengers passing through. Just think about that for a moment. That is an average of 828 passengers per day.

The ability to fly Air North would open up many options for federal employees wishing to fly to the north. I've often thought about the convenience of flying on Yukon's northern carrier, Air North. Now with their recent announcement, starting in February, we can now fly Air North from Whitehorse to Yellowknife and on to Ottawa. For a small northern airline, that is a significant accomplishment.

It is this government's hope that the Yukon Legislative Assembly will convey Yukoners' support of our local airline and other northern carriers to take a proactive approach to doing business here in the north.

I'll now move on to my fourth point, which is that northern carriers provide their services using appropriate aircraft. Unique among its competitors, Air North has made Whitehorse the hub of its business operations. It has made its significant investments in both real property construction and ongoing operations, including its head office and administration, flight crews, call centre, maintenance shops and kitchen, which together employ over 200 Yukoners. The federal employees will not be flying on inadequate or antiquated equipment.

So let me just mention Air North's fleet for a moment as I'd like to note the sizable commitment they've made in our territory. Based on the information from their website, Air North has a Boeing 737-500, which seats 122 passengers. They have a Boeing 737-400, which seats 153 passengers. They have three Boeing 737-200s, which seat 120 passengers each. They have four Hawker Siddeley 748s that they configure depending on how many passengers and how much cargo they are flying. That shows they have a sizable fleet with which they serve the north.

So I'll continue to my fifth point, which is that northern carriers provide a great customer service. Some of my constituents in Porter Creek South shared with me how much they appreciate the kindness and friendliness of Air North staff. People have spoken to me about how they needed to go south due to family emergencies, like a medical emergency or the death of a loved one. The Air North team did their best to

get them on the first available flight and they treated them like gold.

I'm aware of business professionals and frequent travellers who only fly Air North between Whitehorse and Vancouver during the winter as they are the only airline that they trust to fly during the cold weather.

I've also heard lots of stories from Yukoners about the great service that they receive from Air North. They are truly Yukon's airline.

Based on the importance of northern carriers to the north, our support for them, their recognized quality, their modern and appropriate fleet and their great customer service, I believe that the Government of Canada should adjust its travel booking systems to allow federal government employees the option of using northern carriers when they travel to the north.

This is an important issue to debate as it places the importance of extending service to federal government employees. What does that mean for us in Yukon? It means direct and indirect jobs. It means the potential increase for tourism revenue. It means a potential increase in investments to our territory. If that takes a couple of hours to debate on the floor of this Legislature, that's an investment I'm willing to make because I believe that Yukoners want to hear each and every one of our perspectives.

Ms. White: Just to speak briefly to this motion, it's important to note that there are four other northern carriers that fly to destinations south. There is First Air based out of Yellowknife; there is Northwestern Air based out of Fort Smith; Air North, of course, is based in Whitehorse; and Canadian North is also based in Yellowknife.

With the hopeful changes to the federal travelling system, it will benefit northern communities across the north — with the ability for them to be used as a booking destination. I think it's important to note that right now all federal employees are required to go through the shared travel services — or, as we've been referring it, the Travel AcXess Voyage — whether on-line or by telephone. The trouble that has appeared with those flying from Ottawa is that, when they go on-line, the options given don't necessarily show Air North because up to this point Air North has not flown east. Hopefully that will be changed.

You can make the request to fly from Vancouver to Yukon on Air North, but the problem then becomes that if your plane is delayed and if you fly in directly from Ottawa on Air Canada, then they will make sure you are on the next plane. But if you've switched airlines, that becomes problematic for the booking agents as well.

There are a whole bunch of changes that I think need to happen, both from the perspective of the office in Ottawa as well as in the attitudes of supporting smaller regional airlines.

The benefit for all northern communities is astronomical, as the Member for Watson Lake said. I think she referred to there being approximately 200 employees work for Air North in Yukon, so I can only imagine that the number working for First Air, the Northwestern Air and Canadian North would rival that. I look forward to passing this motion unanimously.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the MLA for Watson Lake for bringing forth what has already been coined as a timely but very important motion that speaks to a matter of importance to all northerners north of 60. It speaks to a sector of our economy that we have seen flourish over the years and it has not been easy. It has taken the cooperation, participation and partnerships of many individuals, companies, industry and governments coming together.

I'd like to begin by talking about — it has already been touched upon — air access for the Yukon. I speak to the Yukon, but I can also stretch that to Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Over the last number of years, from a tourism perspective, from a business perspective and from so many different points of view, air access has really helped guide the growth of the territory in our economy.

When in fact I was running for office back in the year 2002, the issue of air access and supporting our northern carrier — Air North, Yukon's airline — was really at the heart of a lot of discussion at the doorstep. At that time and over the years since we were elected to government in 2002 — and here we are in our third term — we have really gone to work on a number of different levels, working with Air North to really grow the market share.

I believe that there has been a lot of great success. I look back over the years to when I served as Minister of Tourism and Culture, and the programs we have developed as a direct response to companies such as Air North coming to the table and informing, educating and enlightening us all about the importance of air access. Now I can really see the fruits of those labours over the past number of years.

Air North — and I think the Minister of Tourism and Culture has already spoken to this — when you look at the statistics of emplaning and deplaning at the Whitehorse International Airport, it has been pretty staggering in terms of the amount of growth that has occurred over the last several years, compared to other forms of travel in the territory. That is why the Yukon government, through the Department of Highways and Public Works and Tourism and Culture, Economic Development and many others, have really gone to work toward how we can really enhance air access.

It all comes down to, especially from the tourism point of view — it speaks to government travel. It speaks to business connectivity and having those very important connections to our key markets. It is all connected.

I recall a number of years ago, when we first had — actually I'll give credit to the former Liberal government at the time. This will probably be the only time I'll do that, but I will give credit to one program that they introduced, and it was called the gateway cities marketing program.

At that time, it was about \$200,000 a year and it was in support of really working to grow our gateway cities — those being Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary — and working with airlines such as Air North to really grow that market share of tourism. What we did — because we saw such a great uptake, we have been able to really grow that program. It's not called the gateway cities marketing program anymore, but it is

Destination: Yukon. It has probably morphed beyond that to another name since then, but we've been really able to deliver that in leaps and bounds.

Through specific marketing campaigns, as I mentioned, Destination: Yukon, which also reaches into other key gateway cities such as Toronto and the Greater Ottawa area — of course, those are also growth markets and hence, we just saw a recent announcement from Air North to expand their market into Ottawa; likewise, into Yellowknife, which I understand will be introduced in the spring. This too is another great news item and is a direct result of the work that has been done over the years to really expand on those business opportunities.

Other campaigns that we've been able to launch, of course, are with the Pan North partnership, starting with the Look Up North campaign that was really launched back in 2007 in collaboration with the Canada Winter Games. There are members opposite and members on all sides of the Assembly here today who were part of that. Again, it was really the first opportunity of its kind for the three northern territories to come together and jointly market the territories as a destination of choice.

It really got a lot of pickup from there. From there it went into furthering the Look Up North campaign into the Pan North campaigns that we know today, which was further launched during the winter Olympics of 2010. So it continues and all of those opportunities have really helped grow the market share. Air access has really helped us in that regard.

I think we have spoken to Air North, and I agree. There were some comments by members of the Opposition about other northern airlines and this motion speaks to all of those northern airlines. It's not just Air North, but we happen to be very familiar with Air North, being in our backyard or our front yard, and all that it has contributed over the years.

I think of just the huge growth in the personnel, in all the contracts and the services and the programs that have been delivered by Air North — the ingenuity, the partnerships that they have been able to grow because of who they are and because of their track record — from supporting Midnight Sun Coffee to our Yukon Brewing products to supporting local entrepreneurs in providing meals on the actual planes themselves — imagine that.

I thought that was only done here in the Yukon on Air North until I actually flew Canadian North and my eyes opened up again. I really enjoy flying in the north for that very reason. I commend Air North and I commend all of these respective northern airlines for making it a welcoming experience and a unique destination.

I'm often reminded that when you step on that airline, it really is the first experience that welcomes you to the north. We can never forget that experience. That's where it really starts, when you put your foot on that plane. I think I've referenced this before, but Air North has been hugely — the individuals who work there are just so helpful and accommodating. For that, I just thank them. I'll never forget the one time that my child, who I think was just reaching maybe a year and a half — and the entire trip from Vancouver

to Whitehorse was nonstop, all-out fury. It was just crying, and I don't know how to say that eloquently, but it was a bit of a nightmare trip, I can tell you. Thanks to those attendants, they took my son and walked him up and down that aisle and helped alleviate some of that pressure on a very full plane, I might add.

Those are just some of the smaller examples I can point to for Air North. Of course, of all the corporate sponsorship and the support of community events, there are not too many events or fundraisers in this community or in the north that I can think of that Air North hasn't been part of or hasn't helped fund. Again, that's good news for us all around.

When we speak to the motion here, as the Minister of Economic Development referred, we're not looking for preferential practices. What we're looking for is just a fair shake, fair access for northern carriers to the same opportunities as the rest of the country. What we have been able to do, though, through programs such as marketing programs that work in those specific gateway cities, those joint cooperative marketing initiatives — the tourism cooperative marketing fund is another example of a great funding mechanism that we introduced a number of years ago and it has helped leverage dollars — is to partner with Air North many times in being able to showcase the Yukon. It's through the eyes of Air North, or through the eyes of a northern tourism operator or business. It's all good for us. Any time you can promote the Yukon, with the name "Yukon" in a headline or in a paper or magazine, it's all good for the Yukon, for the north.

We've also spoken on this floor of the Legislative Assembly about other ways to assist interline agreements for ticketing or baggage purposes. There has been a lot of work done on that front as well, and Air North has succeeded on many different fronts. The airline industry has evolved significantly over the years. It has become much more competitive. It has become more regionalized. That's why I'm heartened to hear that there is work being done, and continuing to be done, on the national front with the many organizations and respective governments across the country, to reflect those unique realities, particularly when it comes to our regions here in the country and how we can better facilitate programs and services and investments that help leverage the further growth of those particular companies.

I know there was some debate earlier about the Yukon government perhaps not paying enough or as much attention to tourism as we do with mining. Mr. Speaker, when we look to the Department of Tourism and Culture, it was this government that re-instated that Department of Tourism and Culture, really highlighting the significant importance in the overall economy and what it has done for the quality of life that we as Yukoners have come to know.

We have done a lot of work and we work collaboratively with the Department of Economic Development and we have invested significantly in not only marketing initiatives, product development and visitor services, but also in infrastructure — infrastructure in support of the growth of tourism, which also benefits directly our airline industry.

Whether it's for improvements to our airports, to waterfront development that we've seen in Carcross or in Whitehorse, investments in new visitor information centres — the joint collaboration with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, for example, and the Department of Tourism and Culture in the Yukon government is a wonderful example of investments that have helped leverage investments by other governments. It has been a huge win-win.

Investments such as the Kwanlin Dun First Nation Cultural Centre and collaborating with the Whitehorse Public Library and being able to build upon the riverfront planning by the City of Whitehorse and being able to partner first-hand with self-governing First Nations. Those are all good things in support of tourism.

That said, it's great to see that Air North has moved in leaps and bounds as one northern carrier out of a number of carriers throughout the north. We have seen them reach into not only our gateway cities, but now move forward into Ottawa and into Yellowknife. Those are key markets. We've seen them move, of course, into charter businesses as well — charters offered in the Lower Mainland — and they've done a lot more of those — and they have picked up a lot of freight agreements as well.

Likewise, the recent work as a result of our Minister of Tourism and Culture and the Premier being able to facilitate those significant networks with international carriers — Condor — by being able to open that door to a lot of the overseas tourism operators. That is very important because it is those tourism operators and those agents who are actually putting bums on the seats and who are actually delivering to the net worth of the company, but obviously the net worth of many families — over 200 families in the territory, to say the least — and what that means as a result of the spinoff benefits with other companies and services.

So all in all, we have seen significant progress, but this in itself is just another opportunity for us to unite as legislators in this Assembly and to come together. I do appreciate the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. He recognizes that this is a very good motion and puts his full support behind it. I appreciate those comments because not every day do we tend to say a lot of nice things in this Assembly about each other, but I do recognize that this is a good motion. I am very pleased to be able to help support this motion and to be able to have a united voice to provide to the Government of Canada in showing another option — an option that will have, undoubtedly, great benefits for our economy, for our families and for our communities, and will help further air access throughout the territory as a result of that. More dollars provide more flexibility to be able to expand your available options.

We know of their enhanced business going into Dawson City, for example, through Holland America, and putting those bums on their particular seats. Again, that is going to help open up added opportunities as well. We just need to continue to do more of that and be creative and continue to seek collaboration and partnerships with all of our respective

individuals and communities and private sector businesses as well.

Seeing the time, I appreciate this opportunity to say a few words and I am very pleased to hear of all the support coming forth from all sides of the Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Thank you for the opportunity to get up here and speak today to Motion No. 500. I would like to thank my fellow colleague, the MLA for Watson Lake, for bringing this motion forward. It's an important motion. I've had the opportunity, over the past few months, to spend some time across the north to talk about strategies in the north and about how important our northern carriers are to us.

Before I start so much on some of the northern carriers, I just wanted to highlight a little bit about the staff that work and meet the high safety standards set by Transport Canada and the investments we put in to improve our airport facilities for everyone. We do take pride in providing a safe environment for aircrafts, pilots and passengers alike. We work in partnership with local, national and international airlines, Nav Canada and every other pilot who uses our facilities to maintain our excellent safety record and to offer the best service we can.

I was saying that the government — we have invested millions in our Yukon airports and aerodromes and, of course, we're going to continue to invest, upgrade and repair our facilities, maintain our excellent safety record and develop infrastructure that is required to realize Yukon's full economic potential. We do, in the Yukon, operate and maintain four airports and 25 aerodromes. This year we had \$8.15 million set aside for capital improvements to the airports, which is important to our northern carriers. This is nearly \$28 per passenger journey over \$250 per Yukon resident.

Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport — and I might add it is an international airport — along with the Dawson City, Old Crow and Watson Lake airports is also certified to meet federal regulations for scheduled air carrier flights from the south or, like some of my fellow colleagues have been speaking to, pan northern — across the north.

Whitehorse has seen a 94-percent increase in passengers arriving and departing out of the airports since the Yukon government assumed operations of the airport in 1996. I know my fellow colleague, the Minister of Tourism, has spoken to some of these numbers. Almost 300,000 passengers used the Erik Nielsen Airport in 2012. An additional 80,000 visited, either meeting family or utilizing airport services.

Also something that we can be cognizant of is the number of passengers that use our Dawson Airport. It has more than doubled in the past 10 years. With some of the conversations that we've had — the minister and I have spoken to this — there's an increase in flight traffic to Fairbanks coming in the summer.

Our community aerodromes support the aircraft charter activities. These are our northern carriers and they provide communities with access to emergency health care through the support of our air medevac operations. As well, they facilitate

the RCMP and justice aerial firefighting activities and they're basically just a hub of activity for us in the north.

What comes to my attention a little bit is something that was outlined in the federal government's most recent Speech from the Throne. What struck me was the fact that they said: "We are a northern country. We are a northern people. Canada's greatest dreams are to be found in our highest latitudes. They are the dreams of a North confident and prosperous, the True North, strong and free."

I know it seems to me that the Senate has become a bit of utmost importance to debate in this House. But I will say that the Senate Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, through their good work, released a report entitled *One Size Doesn't Fit All: The Future Growth and Competitiveness of Canadian Air Travel*. One of the report's findings was that Canada needs a national air travel strategy, one that takes into account the specific needs and challenges of different regions and some of the regions, of course, being us here in the north, Mr. Speaker.

A significant portion of the report was dedicated to the north, and with due reason. Northern air carriers face significant challenges. Across the north, many air carriers provide an essential service to otherwise inaccessible northern communities. However, the costs of operating these regional routes are not sustainable. As such, the price of air travel within the north is significantly higher than travel within the rest of the country.

Some of my fellow colleagues — the Member for Watson Lake did a little research on the price of tickets and we heard from her earlier. As such, an antidote, I guess, to this problem may not be more competition. The Senate report notes that increased competition can have a negative effect on the travel costs in the north. I think we've seen that in the past. The Yukon is fortunate to have quite a robust air transportation network, centred on an international airport in Whitehorse. Yet we can do more to make the north more accessible and more affordable, of course.

This is where — "THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to adjust its travel booking systems to allow federal government employees the option of using northern carriers when they travel to the North" — this plays into it.

I want to quote something that Joe Sparling, the president of Air North's Airline said: "Firstly, most of us would likely agree that economic development is important to the Yukon, and also that the resource sector has always been and will likely continue to be a key component of economic development in our Territory. Secondly, it might similarly be agreed that Yukon First Nations are an emerging and growing component of the Yukon economy, and that First Nations want to become involved in the future growth," as we see with the partnership with Air North and the Vuntut Gwitchin.

Today, Air North's airline has almost 1,400 Yukon residents who — the Leader of the Official Opposition spoke to — are class C and class D shareholders and more than 600 Yukon residents of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation beneficiaries are shareholders.

They also have almost 180 Yukon employees. One in 15 Yukon residents has either an equity or employment stake in its airline. Local investors have thus far provided more than \$8 million in equity capital, thus facilitating the acquisition of a few new airplanes.

When it comes to Air North and looking at how Air North operates in the north, it brings to mind something that does play into this too, which is a television program that is on the *History* channel. It plays into the fact that *Ice Pilots* is a show that is in the north. When we talk about how difficult it is for a northern airline to operate in the north — I want to read the first two paragraphs of intro into what *Ice Pilots* — the show — is about.

“Sky-high dreams, an appetite for adventure, and nerves of steel are virtually prerequisites for a job at Buffalo Airways” — that’s a northern airline, a northern carrier — “as is living in the North. Discover what makes each member of this motley crew tick as they battle harsh conditions, the limits of WWII-era aircraft, and sometimes one another in order to keep Buffalo airlines and their flying dreams alive.”

So Buffalo Joe — “the team does whatever it takes to get people and cargo where they need to go in Canada’s North. With a company’s reputation at stake and flying careers on the line, it’s not uncommon for tempers to flare and personalities to clash. Any conflict, though, must be quickly put aside as cooperation is crucial in this merciless environment.”

I heard the Minister of Education speak about “bums on seats”, which means having your seats full so you can have an airline.

Other airlines that compete from the south — their jobs are in the south. The northern carriers are jobs — as I spoke to with Air North’s job. I’ve had the opportunity to travel with many northern airline carriers, from Air Tindi to Summit Air to First Air to Canadian North. I might add that Canadian North just relocated — much to the unhappiness of some of the residents of the Northwest Territories — and they moved their headquarters south to Alberta. But Air North and Buffalo Airways — I’ve flown on all those.

I want to talk a little bit about the hospitality of some of the northern carriers that I’ve heard us speak to in this House — the hospitality of our northern airlines and what they’ll do.

I had the opportunity — I had 30,000 rounds of 303 shells, over \$110,000 in cash, rations and food, and I was being dropped off at Air Tindi to go to Iqaluit to have the opportunity to help instruct a shooting competition.

They didn’t have a plane; it was gone. They loaded me up and took me across the street to Summit Air, where they already had the plane booked for us. We got out within 15 minutes of our departure time and we made it to Iqaluit. The competition is among themselves, but the northern airlines work together.

Being the Minister of Highways and Public Works, I’ve noticed that having local carriers in the north — my employees and through some of the stuff that I’ve been reading — how they cooperate and work with us. They work with Transport Canada. They are there to listen. They provide valuable input into infrastructure upgrades that are needed.

I’d really like to just commend this motion. I’d like to thank all the members who have supported it. I believe that, through the hard work of this Legislative Assembly and some of the motions that we pass unanimously, it doesn’t go unheard with our federal counterparts. I’ve heard that some of the ministers applicable will be drafting letters and encouraging the Government of Canada, as will I.

On that note, I would just like to say, let’s get more people on our local airlines and let’s support this motion.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I’m pleased today to rise in support of this motion. I thank my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, for bringing this forward. It’s important in speaking to this motion to remind members of the context.

In the Yukon, of course, we have Air North, our local airline, which brands itself as Yukon’s airline. I think it is fair to say that it has the strong support of most Yukoners and is recognized by Yukon citizens as being one of the large private sector employers, with more than 200 Yukon employees, an annual Yukon payroll of more than \$9 million and a significant contribution to the economy of the territory. It is of note that, in terms of Air North’s contribution, Air North employees account for more than 1.5 percent of the private sector Yukon workforce and more than 1.5 percent of Yukon GDP. That contribution is a significant portion of the economy, and the value that we’ve seen from having Air North expand to jet service, I think, has really been evident.

In fact, as many members will recall, the cost of air travel in the territory over the past 20 years, or even more, has in fact gone down. It used to be more expensive to fly Outside than after we saw the injection of competition. The fact that Air North stepped forward after years of providing piston-engine service through planes such as DC-3s and DC-4s — their entrance into the jet market really saw Yukon getting improved service, improved opportunity and improved pricing, as well as more economic benefit than is provided by carriers that do not base their hub in this area.

So the motion as presented by my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, refers to northern carriers generally, as we’re attempting with this to recognize and acknowledge the fact, as some of my colleagues have noted, that Canadian North operates and provides a contribution to the economies of the other territories, particularly to the Northwest Territories. The generality of the wording is intended to acknowledge the other two territories but, in the case of the Yukon, we have Air North as Yukon’s airline. In addition to the percentage of the economy, my understanding is that almost one in 15 Yukon residents, including the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation citizens, have an equity stake in the airline, which is fairly notable in terms of the share of a private company.

Although I don’t have the statistics on it, I would think that it’s fair to say that that has to be the highest percentage of direct ownership of Yukon citizens in any particular company — or one of the highest — out of all the various companies that are out there. My colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, may have more specific numbers, but that has

to rank as one of the highest, if not the highest, in terms of the number of Yukoners participating in and owning an equity share in any company.

Another thing that I would like to note is that aviation is perhaps an under-recognized and under-valued contributor to the northern economy. While this motion is specific to urging the Government of Canada to adjust its travel booking systems, it's also a good time to acknowledge and recognize the contribution of small plane companies — the various individual operators of float-plane and other services, the helicopter operators and, of course, Alcan Air, which for many years has had the Yukon's medevac contract. It provides an important and, in some cases, life-saving service to Yukon and to Yukon citizens. All of those locally based companies contribute both through the owners, the pilots, the mechanics and all of the various services associated with them. Both directly and indirectly, they contribute to Yukon's economy.

During 2009, northern air carriers transported more than 830,000 passengers and almost 150-million pounds of cargo to, from or within the north. Additionally, northern air carriers account for almost 1,700 territorial jobs, more than \$76 million in annual territorial payroll, more than \$1 million in territorial property and business taxes, and more than \$50 million in annual non-payroll spending with hundreds of local businesses in the three territories. Again, those numbers I just referenced are relevant to the other territories as well, not specific to Yukon.

The total real GDP of all three territories combined is just over \$6 billion, or about 0.5 percent of Canada's gross domestic product. A study by Oxford Economics indicates that, in Canada, airlines directly account for about 0.5 percent of GDP, and aviation, including catalytic effects, accounts for about 2.8 percent of the GDP.

The same study indicates that airlines directly account for 0.5 percent of jobs in Canada, and aviation, including catalytic effects, accounts for about 3.3 percent of jobs in Canada. In the north, aviation plays a much larger role in the local economy, directly accounting for more than 1.5 percent of territorial GDP and more than 1.5 percent of private sector territorial jobs, representing three times the employment and GDP contribution compared to southern Canada.

Aviation is a product that everyone in the north uses. An affordable and efficient aviation network benefits both residents and visitors, and the presence of a transportation hub in any region will provide a significant number of permanent year-round jobs in that region. The economic benefits that accrue from a transportation infrastructure hub are significant and may be illustrated using the Yukon market as an example.

The establishment of a transportation infrastructure hub in Whitehorse by Air North, Yukon's airline, in 2002 led to more than a two-percent increase in private sector jobs in the Yukon. Air North employees now represent more than 1.5 percent of the private sector Yukon workforce. Air North has 75 percent of its employees located, and 85 percent of its payroll dollars earned, in the Yukon. This includes pilots, flight attendants, maintenance personnel, cargo, catering,

ramp and passenger services personnel, along with call centre, marketing, administrative and management personnel.

I would like to note contextually that I think it's worth recognizing the fact that, when Air North first moved to jet service, there were some challenges and, had it not been for steps that were taken by the Yukon government to improve and increase the share of Yukon government employees who were using Air North for business travel, based on the numbers that Air North presented to us in 2002, they would not have been able to keep operating that jet service and would not have been the success that they are today.

Although federal government travel is not as large a portion of the total air travel as Yukon government employees, that change to the booking system — the relevant importance of that — is illustrative to this specific request in the motion today that, 11 years ago, had there not been steps taken by the Yukon government to increase the share of government employee travel on Air North, what Air North had told us at that point in time is that they would not have been able to continue offering that jet service.

The benefits of that, as I noted, in terms of the contribution to Yukon's economy, are quite significant. Comparatively, the numbers we have show that Air North's jet service provides about 14.12 full-time equivalent jobs per 100 scheduled departures, in comparison to Air Canada's scheduled service, which provides about 1.39 full-time equivalent jobs per 100 scheduled departures. Again, more than 10 times the employment benefit is a result of those seats coming into and departing from the territory and is illustrative of the impact that support for northern carriers has, not only to the Yukon, but also as to the effect that similar situations can have in the other territories.

Pointing to the change in fares, it's also important to recognize, as I mentioned earlier, that the significant drop in fares that we've seen since the 1980s — from what fares commonly were at — is illustrative of the benefits of competition and the benefits of having local carriers.

Other benefits, as members will know, are the benefits that have been seen and, in many cases, been a subject of letters to the editor to Yukon's papers regarding Air North. They have demonstrated a real recognition of the importance of serving their clientele, recognizing that, as important as tourism is to their economic success, their bread and butter is the Yukon citizens and Yukon customers who continue to return and use their service because of a preference for it and recognition of the economic value that that airline provides.

As members will probably recall, there have been a number of letters to the editor over the years from citizens who have received what they felt was exceptional service on Air North, expressing their pleasure with that. That is not something that one typically sees with the average airline. Again, that close local connection and the close economic ties give increased benefit and cause a situation where those who are the employees of a company are serving people who, in many cases, are their friends, their neighbours, their team members in sporting events, and so on and so forth.

I would also like to recognize that the only time that I've had an issue of any significance involving Air North — any challenge, that is — I had received a call from a constituent who was concerned about and having difficulties with their disabled child and the need for specialized accommodations on the plane. I called Joe Sparling, the president, and he gave me the contact information — who I should have my constituent call — and welcomed me to follow up with him if there were any issues.

But they dealt with the matter in a manner that was prompt, was respectful of my constituent's concerns and ultimately provided them with a resolution to the challenge they were facing. Again, that was done extremely promptly and extremely quickly and is evidence of the non-economic benefits that result from having local carriers.

Another point that I think is worth mentioning is — particularly in light of some of the discussion that has been going on recently in the national and international media with regard to the claims being put forward by Canada and other nations for the Arctic and the competing claims, in some cases, for territory. The debate that this week, and I believe last week, surfaced in the House of Commons about who owns the North Pole and whether Canada should put forward a claim for it — one should not hang too much importance on the air travel component of the economy alone in terms of asserting our sovereignty in the north and over the Arctic, but it is a key factor and a key element in terms of serving communities. In the case of Old Crow, the riding of my colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, the service they receive from northern carriers, in particular Air North, is important to their success and health as a community and is important to servicing that community.

As I think you know very well, Mr. Speaker, one of the key factors in determining a country's sovereignty over an area includes their economic usage of an area and the demonstration that they continue to occupy and use an area, whether that be land, air or sea.

The north represents about 40 percent of Canada's land mass, about 0.3 percent of Canada's population and approximately one percent of Canada's passenger air traffic. There are approximately 65 communities in northern Canada that receive scheduled air service, and only eight of those communities are served by jet aircraft. There are only 10 paved runways in all of northern Canada. It is clear that the north represents a lot of geography and not a lot of traffic. It is also clear from that that air service to, from and within the north is vitally important.

While the importance of air access to residents of communities that have no road access is quite obvious, access to southern gateways and beyond is becoming more important to northerners every day. While this motion itself is specifically relevant to the Government of Canada's booking system, it is the increased number of flights and increased amount of air access that are important not only to citizens, but are also key factors in tourism and the ability to book clients from Canada, the U.S. or overseas markets to come to

the Yukon and to have an increased number of seats and flights that are convenient to their needs.

So with respect to aviation, I think that northern air carriers do a tremendous job of linking northern communities to one another and to southern gateways and also provide an important competitive force in the local marketplace. Another thing that I would note is that when Whitehorse was a monopoly market, the mileage costs at lower fuel costs were higher at that point in time and the —

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague is reminding me, I'm running short of time. In the interest of expediting debate and hearing from other members, I will at this point conclude my remarks and commend this motion to the House.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I just to weigh in briefly on this motion brought forward by the Member for Watson Lake because of the importance of northern air carriers, not only to the Yukon, but as mentioned, to the N.W.T. and Nunavut as well. We need to ensure that those carriers stay viable. Having the option for federal employees to travel on those carriers, I think, is one way to ensure that they do stay viable and competitive in the northern marketplace with some of the national carriers that service northern communities as well.

One of the most important reasons — maybe I'll take a little bit of a different tack from previous speakers who have spoken about the importance for business. We recognize the business travel importance, whether it's individuals who are travelling to the Yukon for conferences — mining conferences, such as the Geoscience, spring to mind — or individuals who come up to engage in mineral exploration activity or other business ventures, no matter what they are, there is the importance of these northern carriers to our tourism sector. I know the Minister of Tourism and Culture and others have highlighted what they mean to ensuring that visitors have choices to get here and options to travel to the Yukon and our northern neighbours, as well as taking flights not only at the major hubs in these communities, but taking flights out to smaller communities within our respective jurisdictions. These companies, I do believe, need to be viable not only for their importance for us locals to travel with them, but for the business and tourism sectors, as well.

One of the things I just quickly wanted to focus on, and really thank these carriers for, is their contributions to local charities. Having worked for the Canadian Cancer Society as well as the Yukon Hospital Foundation over the past number of years before I was elected in 2011, I recognize the important contributions that Air North has made to the Yukon. You can't go anywhere to a silent auction table or a live auction without seeing a trip for two from Air North provided to one of their gateway cities.

I think you're hard-pressed, as well, to find any raffle tickets without one of the top prizes being something donated by Air North.

It really changed the landscape for those individuals who are engaged in the not-for-profit sector, health care

fundraising, minor hockey, minor soccer or any number of individuals who rely on fundraising to ensure that they can partially meet the needs of their organizations.

As I mentioned, when I was with the Canadian Cancer Society, Air North was a critical sponsor for the Relay for Life — not only the Relay for Life that we had here in Whitehorse, but also the one that was hosted in Dawson City, raising money for prevention, advocacy and research, and information and support for individuals who are living with cancer.

Moving on to a fairly long association that I had, not only as a volunteer but later as an employee, with the Yukon Hospital Foundation — that very first Northwestel Festival of Trees — Air North was there with one of the top trees, as far as what it was able to attract for bids during the live auction. They continue to be there to this day as a proud partner of the Hospital Foundation. I'm sure their efforts have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Hospital Foundation to purchase that much-needed medical diagnostic equipment that that organization participates in, in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services.

I just want to quickly talk — going through the website — about what First Air does, another northern carrier, as far as their charitable involvement. When looking at their website, it speaks to community first. I'll just read from their website: "Through grass-roots community reinvestment, meaningful employment opportunities and by providing beneficiaries with tangible benefits, First Air continues to demonstrate social responsibility and leadership in northern transportation services."

Some of the charities that this organization supports will be familiar to Yukoners. The Arctic Winter Games is not a charity but an event that is supported by First Air. They support other smaller events like the Caribou Carnival in Yellowknife, the Children's Wish Foundation, computers for schools, Ducks Unlimited — the Festival of Trees is one of the programs that they support in Yellowknife, which is sponsored by Northwestel in that community but supports the Stanton Territorial Hospital Foundation. There is Habitat for Humanity, a charity that many Yukoners are familiar with including, of course, the Minister of Health and Social Services and his involvement with that organization prior to being elected — the list goes on and on, from sporting organizations like the NWT Curling Association to the NWT Literacy Council, the Northwest Territories Soccer Association, the SPCA, the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association, as well as the RCMP and their D.A.R.E. program, which is a police-officer-led series of classroom lessons that teaches children from kindergarten through grade 12 how to resist peer pressure and live productive drug- and violence-free lives.

Mr. Speaker, the Royal Canadian Legion is an organization that is supported by First Air — an organization I know that you're very well familiar with due to your involvement serving that organization over the many years that you've done so. The mission of the Legion is to serve

veterans and their dependents, promote remembrance and act in the service of Canada and its communities.

There are so many organizations — again, just going through the list, it's quite remarkable — from Special Olympics to Skills Canada Northwest Territories — it would take forever to list off all the organizations that these northern carriers support. I'm sure that this list is matched by support that Canadian North also offers for communities.

I think that tying this back to the motion put forward by the Member for Watson Lake, this is an opportunity for the federal government to include northern carriers and ensure that many of these organizations that are supported by companies such as Air North, First Air and Canadian North, and some of the smaller carriers that the Minister of Community Services referred to when he spoke — it can't be understated the importance that these individual companies have to the various charities and sporting organizations that they support throughout the north.

I'd really like to again take the opportunity to thank them because, as mentioned, it's very difficult to attend any event that has a fundraising aspect without seeing Air North's logo on it. I applaud them for all of the work that they do in support of our community and the communities that they serve. I believe they also have events and organizations that they support in their gateway cities of Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and now Kelowna, as well as the communities north of Whitehorse — Dawson City, Inuvik, Old Crow.

Air North has been a long-serving member of our community. I believe, through their efforts and our efforts to ensure that they're given a fair shake with respect to federal government travel, it's great to hear the support of individuals who are speaking on behalf of this airline here in the Legislature today — and indeed all northern carriers.

So again, to Air North and every carrier that operates and serves the north, I'd like to say thank you for all that they do for our communities. I look forward to bringing this important motion to a vote shortly so that we can ensure that a unified message from this Legislative Assembly is transmitted to the decision-makers in Ottawa with respect to this important business that we're talking about here today.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank all of the members of the Legislature who have taken the time and opportunity to present their views and thoughts, and what clearly seems to be support for this motion, and I look forward to a speedy passage. I want to thank the Minister of Economic Development for his forward thinking on this file and already initiating contact with his federal counterparts.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

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

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 500 agreed to

Motion No. 532

Clerk: Motion No. 532, standing in the name of Mr. Elias.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a funding program to promote local festivals celebrating multicultural diversity, including celebrating the contributions of new Yukoners.

Mr. Elias: It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to this motion. I would like to see the Government of Yukon examine the development of a multicultural funding program that would promote local festivals celebrating the cultural diversity and contributions of new Yukoners.

Our culture is very important to us. It both reflects and defines our values and principles. The government receives requests for assistance but the Department of Tourism and Culture does not have a funding program to address these requests. Tourism industry members have identified festivals as a tourist attractant, especially during the winter season.

Yukon has a significant number of immigrants from other countries and their family members who wish to share their culture with Yukoners and our visitors alike. What I envision is a fund to support local associations of new Yukoners seeking to share their vibrant cultures with us all. This would be an addition to the funding opportunities available to them through the community development fund. The community development fund, CDF, gives Yukon community, industry and professional associations, non-profit and charitable organizations, and municipal and First Nation governments money for projects and events that support community well-being, create jobs, generate spending on Yukon goods and

services and have measurable social, cultural and economic benefits for Yukon residents and communities.

The primary goal of the CDF is to fund projects and events that provide long-term benefits and value to Yukon communities. CDF has four intakes per year for projects under \$20,000. What I see is an opportunity to address smaller needs, much less than \$20,000, and do it on an ongoing basis. My suggestion would be that a cultural group that received funding would be eligible for one funding approval per year from the fund and that it would be for only a part of what they need.

The Minister of Tourism and Culture shared with me that he has been approached by members of the Filipino, Vietnamese and Chinese communities, who have inquired about financial assistance for events celebrating their culture. They might be looking for funding to secure a venue, or perhaps pre-order food for an event, or it could be for things like a singing competition, a moon festival or for Chinese New Year.

It would be great if we could respond to these requests more frequently than once every few months.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about how we can attract tourists and retain local dollars in our economy. I will first talk about how important culture is in general, and then I'll talk about specific examples. I want to explore the importance of culture for ourselves. I then want to talk about our culture as an important tourism asset.

As community builders, understanding culture is our business. Whether you live in Watson Lake or Mayo, or whether you live in Riverdale, Haines Junction or Dawson City, you are working with and establishing relationships with people — people who all have cultures.

Culture is a strong part of people's lives. It influences their views, their values, their humour, their hopes, their loyalties and their worries and fears.

So when you are working with people and building relationships with them, it helps to have some perspective and understanding of their cultures. When we all have practical information about how to understand culture, we establish relationships with people from cultures different from our own. We then build strong and diverse communities.

Each cultural group has unique cultural perspectives that the larger community can benefit from. We need a wide range of ideas, customs and wisdom to solve problems and enrich our community life.

Because culture is a reflection of the ever-changing community, culture is also ever-changing and culture is compelling. I'm going to talk about our tourism numbers for a few minutes, because I want to show that tourists come for our culture.

Tourist visitation in Yukon is growing. While I cannot speak to the numbers the MLA for Klondike and the Leader of the Official Opposition are quoting, Yukon visitation statistics from the 2012 Yukon visitor tracking program indicate that, since 2004, for the period June to September, visitation to Yukon has increased 26 percent, which equates to an annualized growth rate of three percent per year.

It is clear that Yukon's tourism industry is growing and offers great growth potential for the future. We are proud that Yukon is out-performing the Canadian average for growth in tourism visitation, which is the result of the strategic and effective approach that the department, our tourism industry operators and NGOs have taken with regard to marketing and investment decisions.

Time and time again I ask myself, "How do we know if our marketing strategy is working? Is there a way to supplement our current efforts? Would multicultural festivals add to the attractiveness of Yukon?"

In answer to the first question, "How do we know if our marketing strategy is working?" — I think we need to look at the facts. Border crossing statistics provided by the Canada Border Services Agency are another key indicator and measure of tourism visitation. Border crossing statistics remain Yukon's most accurate indicator of visitors entering Yukon because of their reliability and the consistency in the way that they have tracked numbers over the last 25 years.

These statistics indicate that, for the period of January to August 2013, border crossings to Yukon are up nine percent compared to the same period in 2012, representing an increase of 23,274 more people entering Yukon through the Yukon's four border crossings.

Private vehicle traffic was up 10 percent and motorcoach traffic was up eight percent. Within these numbers, we had an eight-percent increase from United States citizens, a 16-percent increase from Canadians and a seven-percent increase from foreign visitors. That amounted to more than 290,000 visitors entering Yukon from January to August of this year.

In 2012, Yukon hosted over 320,000 visitors from around the world, including nearly 34,000 overseas visitors. Each year, tourism generates \$200 million in revenue for Yukon businesses. Over one-quarter of all Yukon businesses generate some of their revenue from tourism, with more than four percent of the Yukon's GDP directly attributed to tourism.

A record 294,000 passengers travelled through the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport last year — the fourth straight year of growth in travel to Yukon by air. More than 3,500 Japanese visitors will visit Yukon this year to experience Yukon's winter and northern lights. For example, think about how exciting that would be for a Japanese visitor to come to the Yukon to experience a festival celebrating Japan's culture, put on by a local Japanese association, and then enjoy the northern lights. That is a tourism product that I think would sell itself.

Germany continues to be the Yukon's largest overseas market, representing approximately 26 percent of overseas visitors. Whitehorse is the smallest city in North America with direct flights to Germany.

Condor brought over 4,000 visitors to Yukon this year, contributing \$8 million to \$10 million to our Yukon economy. Visitor information centres in six Yukon communities provided travel information and visitor services to over 231,000 visitors. We provide \$1.2 million to the 13 museums and seven First Nation cultural centres that present our culture and history to 100,000 visitors each year. Over 100,000

people stop at a museum or a cultural centre to learn about our history and our culture.

The Yukon government's Beringia Centre and the MacBride Museum are Yukon's most-visited museums, with over 20,000 visitors a year. In terms of our cultural vibrancy, I want to mention that, this year, the Yukon government added eight works to the Yukon Permanent Art Collection. Valued at \$2.5 million, the 370-piece collection is displayed in 24 public or government buildings. One of the comments I've heard is that while our scenery is absolutely spectacular, particularly in northern Yukon, what makes someone get in their car or book a flight isn't just our pretty vistas but the compelling stories of the people who lived here and continue to live here.

Since April, the department has so far provided \$40,000 to support 13 advanced artist projects that contribute to artistic and community development. Since April, over \$52,000 of funding has so far been provided to support 17 Yukon artists to tour creative works nationally and internationally. This year, the department has so far provided \$1.1 million of funding to 56 non-profit arts organizations and collectives.

This funding enabled visitors and Yukoners to enjoy and participate in artistic and cultural activities in 12 Yukon communities and locations. Yukon hosted the Tourism ministers meeting in September of 2013. The meeting was focused on Canadian tourism competitiveness and the ministers discussed improving visitor access, marketing and tourism attraction development. In October, Tourism Yukon hosted a networking event called "Food, Farms and Festivals" to discuss opportunities to develop culinary tourism in the territory. The event was an unqualified success with 65 people registering to participate. I've never heard of "culinary tourism", Mr. Speaker, but you know what? It turns out that this is an area where we can develop and grow in our territory.

Supported by a \$200,000 contribution from the department, 80 Yukoners performing visual, literary, fashion and culinary arts were showcased at Northern Scene, a 10-day festival in Ottawa featuring established and emerging artists from the north. This happened in April of 2013. Part of that money went to promoting Yukoners' culinary arts in Ottawa. We have some terrific opportunities to develop that here in our territory. If anyone wonders about the emerging importance of culinary tourism, I would suggest they check out the number of TV shows that showcase foods from around the world. Obviously there's a market of people interested in that.

One of the things that I see is the desire to build upon our cultural assets. The department provided \$345,000 to the Northern Cultural Expressions Society in funding to support its carving programs that help emerging artists develop the artistic, social and business skills required for personal success — in 2013.

Supported by the department's touring artist fund, Yukon artists shared their talents with fellow Canadians and with audiences abroad in Australia, Belgium, China, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. I look at that and I think to myself,

that's great — I'm proud we are working to share our culture abroad.

Is there a way that we can build upon that success? Is there a way that we can help Yukoners share their culture here at home? Is there a way we can do it so that we can support both culture and tourism? I believe that there is.

We can work with local groups to promote local festivals celebrating our multicultural diversity, including celebrating the contributions of new Yukoners.

The context for developing a program in the Yukon allocates considerable resources to bolstering our cultural community. Let me share with this Assembly some of the funds we provide. The arts operating funds; the special project funding; touring artist fund; the advanced artist funding; the Artist in the School program; Culture Quest, through the Yukon Arts Centre; and the Yukon permanent art collection. We also provide dedicated funding for Yukon Arts Centre, the Dawson City Arts Society and Northern Cultural Expressions.

As I looked over the list, I was impressed by how much Yukon is doing to support and promote our culture. I see an opportunity for the government to add to this impressive list of accomplishments by addressing funding for cultural groups, including new Yukoners. I would like to see the government develop a funding program to promote local festivals celebrating multicultural diversity, including celebrating the contributions of new Yukoners.

I would appreciate hearing from the members with their views and opinions on this motion that I put forward in the House today.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for his motion today and for some of the views that he has expressed this afternoon in supporting his motion.

The motion from the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin urging the Government of Yukon to develop a funding program to promote local festivals celebrating multicultural diversity, including celebrating the contributions of new Yukoners, has many elements that the Official Opposition supports.

I do think there are a number of aspects of this motion that warrant us having a further conversation and exploring a bit further some of the implications and perhaps some of the other opportunities that, in the wording or as expressed so far, is not as clear to me in terms of how to take maximum benefit of the opportunities that exist for achieving the objective that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has elaborated or set out in this motion.

In the Yukon, besides the founding people of Canada — First Nation, Métis and Inuit people — we have people resident in this territory from many places. Certainly that has expanded over the years from the original settlers and those who largely came from the United Kingdom and France. Our cultural diversity has grown and has been enhanced with the movement to North America, to Canada and to Yukon of peoples from many, many other places. Whereas there were certain groups that initially occupied the country of Canada, our diversity has grown with Slavic people, northern Europeans, southern Europeans, peoples from Sub-Saharan

Africa, the Caribbean, South Asia, Latin America, the Philippines most recently, China for quite a long time, Japan — many, many countries. I think that the diversity in the Yukon — although numerically we are obviously smaller in numbers, the proportionality of this growing diversity provides a richness to the fabric of the life and culture that is Yukon.

To that end, I think that the notion or the idea that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin expresses in wanting to capture that through the idea of festivals and celebrations of the contributions of the cultures is really, really important.

Mr. Speaker, this is an aspect of our culture in Canada, our being Canadian, that has been something that has been a lifelong commitment of my own. I may have mentioned this before, but in my early years in high school and university, I was involved with groups that were involved in cross-cultural development and cross-cultural education programs and building on the idea where we often — when we think of other cultures — and certainly when I was growing up — and I'm not sure about you, Mr. Speaker, but when I was growing up and in high school, the emphasis on thinking about the world outside of North America was what we were doing for them, and to them, in terms of support, aid and all that kind of stuff.

There were some wise people I was lucky enough to meet in my early years who turned the question upon its head and really asked me and others to begin to think about this: what makes us think that the world began and will end with the Industrial Revolution — with what is going on in North America? It was through a course of a number of years of working with groups of people from around the world that I became so impressed with the contributions and the understanding that while many of my ancestors in northern Europe were living in caves, people in Asia, the Middle East developed very sophisticated cultures, as in Africa — sophisticated, complex cultures that contained and used many of the things that we take for granted today in terms of the basis for both cultural and industrial development.

It was through that work I was privileged to be part of in the establishment of a group that was originally called the Calgary International Development Centre. Now I understand it's called the Arusha Centre. I'm dating myself, but it was formed in 1972. The Arusha Centre is a group that celebrates multicultural diversity by essentially providing resources and, I think, programming on local and global social justice issues. It was founded and maintains a belief in an equitable and a compassionate world where difference is understood and valued and where human dignity, the Earth, our ancestors and our future generations are respected. Mr. Speaker, if that's not a living definition of multiculturalism and respect for the multicultural diversity that is Canada and, in essence, the Yukon, then I don't know what is.

My understanding then for many, many years — I guess it's over 40 years — has been that when we talk about multiculturalism, it's not just the superficial, it's not the differences that we celebrate, but it's the cultures, the contributions and the coming together that binds us. It's the

whole notion of what Canada has, over the many, many years — going back to the 1960s — of a cultural mosaic — that we, as a community and as a society, are made richer by the many hues, the many textures of the mosaic that make up this country.

When I think about the potential that exists of celebrating multicultural diversity that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has put forward here, I think we also need to make sure that, as we do that and as we are compelled to celebrate the diversity that is the Yukon and is growing in the Yukon, we are mindful that we do this because we have learned so many lessons from when haven't been open to the diversity and the cultural contributions, or even the openness to accept people from other countries in this country. I think back over the last number of months — and we've certainly talked about some of these in this Legislative Assembly — we've talked about the racist policies of the past that denied any recognition, let alone of the diversity, of people coming to this country.

We think about the treatment of the Chinese and the head tax, the treatment of the South Asian community and the infamous incident with the Komagata Maru in 1914 where over 300 Sikhs were turned back at the Burrard Inlet, sent back because the provincial government of the day had said that they would not accept — and the words used were that they wanted to stop the “brown invasion”. That was the language used. If you go to downtown Vancouver you'll see a plaque there to that reality.

Things have changed and that's the positive piece that we want — that we need to remember why we can't go back. We've had commemoration and a recognition of the internment of the Japanese, completely ignoring the fact that these were Canadian citizens who were interned during the Second World War. We've spoken this week about the harsh reality of our own inability as a country, and as a territory, to recognize the cultural diversity of First Nation people in this territory until very recently — and the impact of residential schools.

I and the Official Opposition heartily, heartily embrace the importance and the notion of multiculturalism and the importance of us recognizing and respecting every culture that makes up the fabric of this territory. Finding ways to celebrate that is incredibly important and there are ways — there are small ways and there are big ways.

The speaker for Vuntut Gwitchin spoke about — and the focus of his conversation seems to be primarily on tourism. That's an important aspect, but it's not what we get out of people that makes diversity and the celebration of multicultural diversity — that's not the sole reason for doing it. I will say, though, that the experience of other cities — large cities like Toronto — if you think about Caribana where there are hundreds of thousands of people. I think if you were to go on-line right now, you would not be able to get a hotel or tickets to the events for next July-August. They are sold out.

Where cities and regions embrace it, multicultural activities take various places. The Member for Klondike comes from a region that has an amazing festival celebrating

the Celtic history of Cape Breton called the Celtic Colours. For 10 days you can go around and you would think you were in Scotland — both by the colours and by the language being spoken.

We have seen, since the Canada Games here — through the hard, hard work of a very dedicated group of people — the development of the Adäka festival. When the Canada Games were being planned in 2007, there initially wasn't a reflection of First Nation culture and art and music. I can tell you that, through the dedicated work of a very small core group of First Nation people, it came off. It has grown. So now I think people would be very disappointed to think that the Adäka Cultural Festival — which really represents another aspect of the cultural diversity of this territory — to think that was not going to exist would be challenging.

So yes, there are many, many reasons why support for cultural diversity and celebrating the importance of our multicultural nature as a country and as a territory is important. It is a fact that multiculturalism has been recognized by law. We have the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* that states that the federal “Minister shall take such measures” that — and I'm just quoting here — assist in the implementation of multiculturalism in Canada. That was intended to include — just to refer to a few of the things that the minister was responsible for — to “provide support to individuals, groups or organizations for the purpose of preserving, enhancing and promoting multiculturalism in Canada” and “encourage the preservation, enhancement, sharing and evolving expression of the multicultural heritage of Canada”.

So as I've said already, there are festivals that celebrate the Celtic culture, francophone culture, Afro-Caribbean cultures, Diwali — South-East Asian cultures — various cultures. I think we need to be looking at how we ensure that, when we talk about — and this is where I would hope that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin would be able to speak a bit more at some point as to how he saw this operating. I am very, very mindful — because the last thing in the world that I would want to encourage — and I would hope and I would believe that the minister opposite wouldn't want to see this happen either — is to provide an opportunity for the federal government to off-load to this territorial government some of its responsibilities.

The federal government, through the multiculturalism programs, has the primary responsibility, working with provinces and territories. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government has made major cuts to program funding for multiculturalism — major cuts. They've moved, they've shifted around, so it has become more and more complicated and, if you talk to anybody who's working in this area, they will tell you that it's more complex and difficult to access federal funds.

That's a problem, but it's not a problem that we should take on solely on our own. We need to work with the federal government to remind them that they have a responsibility here. So if the territorial government is willing to take on additional financial commitments — which I would think is a

great idea — let's not do it by letting the Government of Canada off the hook. We cannot do that, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to the fact, there was a recent audit this summer of the multiculturalism programming at the federal level. What they found was that millions of federal dollars earmarked for multiculturalism are going unspent. What's happening is that at least \$5 million a year, since 2007, has not been disbursed.

So the Department of Citizenship and Immigration is basically taking what was the marquee funding program in terms of multiculturalism — the program that was celebrated as a way of bolstering — of supporting multiculturalism and activities that celebrated that — they've allowed it to be cut. They've not only allowed it to be cut, but they directed it to be cut so that nearly 40 percent of the money that has been voted by Parliament for this purpose is going unused, because they've made it impossible for people to access.

So it has been eroding since the mid-1990s. Even though this year, if you look at the budget, you'll see that it says that the federal government was going to spend \$21.3 million on activities related to multiculturalism, it has been revised down to \$14 million. I don't for a moment think that this territorial government should be trying to fill in the gap left by the federal government.

The signature granting program would, I would think, be an opportunity — if we're looking at developing new program criteria and new program areas for the Yukon government — and would be the interaction budget, but it has been scaled back as well. This was set up to work on the kinds of events that I heard the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin talking about — to support events deemed to promote intercultural understanding, respect for democratic values, civic pride and memory. The memory — that's part of what multiculturalism is about, Mr. Speaker.

What we've seen and what the audit found is essentially that this has become another one of these funnels where there may be 750 applications received. Through the normal process, they are winnowed out, and this year, 560 of those were deemed to be eligible for that funding. But by the time the political process got through, only 39 got through to the ministerial recommendation and only 25 percent of that 39 were funded. For crass political reasons, people are choosing not to spend the money.

That's ironic. If you think about the fact that as the multicultural community grows and as people gain citizenship, you would think that the federal government would want to encourage it by supporting that multicultural community — that diverse community — who may not all be citizens now, but will become citizens — by showing their respect for them and ensuring that the funding is available.

The audit said that the approval process for the projects and events was identified by many stakeholders as the single biggest impediment to the effective operation of the program. The lack of transparency and lengthy timelines associated with this process made it difficult to manage or to expend the budgets.

The Official Opposition is fundamentally in support of any initiative that will promote multiculturalism through local festivals or other means.

We see that already in this territory through the initiatives of the various community groups that a number of people in this Assembly have already had the privilege of participating in with the Filipino community in both Christmas celebrations and in recent — well, partially a celebration and partially almost a commemoration in the sense of the reflections on the typhoon. The Japanese Canadian Association of Yukon has hosted many events to share with Yukoners aspects of their culture, their history and their contribution to this territory — the Chinese Canadian Association of Yukon as well, through the various festivals and New Year gatherings. More and more — tomorrow, the Yukon African Caribbean Association is extending its invitation to Yukoners to both celebrate the cultural diversity that the African-Caribbean community brings, as well as to commemorate Nelson Mandela in a feast and a celebration that's being held at l'AFY tomorrow night.

There are many opportunities for us to work as legislators and for the Government of Yukon to work to enhance the contribution — to enhance our recognition, perhaps is a better way of putting it — our recognition of the contribution made by the multicultural diversity that is the Yukon. As the motion speaks to the notion of promoting festivals — and we know that Yukon has a dynamic arts scene. Our music festivals over the last 35 or more years have been favourites of many performers.

There is no doubt that those festivals have brought in many groups from around the world, which have further enhanced our appreciation for the diversity of culture, music and art, because they bring people together.

To get back to the point that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin raised, they are important economic drivers. They do contribute to the economy and that's great, but I would hope that in establishing — and if the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is successful in getting his colleagues on that side of the House to develop a fund to augment existing sources of funding from the federal government and from the City of Whitehorse that also has funding that it makes available for cultural programming — we're not looking at doing this as a stand-alone, but we're looking at it as how we work together.

I would hope that, in determining whether or not this fund might be established by this government, we would not be looking solely at the bottom line in terms of how much money is generated from that festival as to whether or not it's worth investing in, because Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that for many of these festivals, it's not about making money. It's about reaching out, it's making that connection in the community and it's getting that appreciation. Once that starts to happen, you start seeing the economic spinoffs. People have to recognize that there is something to engage in and with before they are going to spend a heck of a lot of money. Let's hope that we're not just looking at thinking that we're going to wait for the Caribana to land here before we're going to invest.

If the member is successful in having this program funding established, I would hope that we will work in

collaboration with other levels of government, and that we would not be seeking, as a territorial government, to allow the federal government to off-load and renege on its responsibilities and to allow it to continue to underfund against the commitments it has made in federal budgets successively since, well, the 1990s — but for sure, since 2007. We can find ways to build on the work of past New Democrat, Liberal and Yukon Party governments to continue to work on building that diversity that makes the Yukon the place that we all want to live.

I won't go on. The Yukon Official Opposition will support this motion and wish the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin luck as he puts it forward.

Mr. Silver: I will be very brief on this. I want to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing forward this motion today. It does appear that this is something that the Yukon Party government already has in mind for next year's budget and is asking for legislative support on it. It is definitely something that we can get behind.

I will be supporting this motion, but I do have a few questions based on the opening comments. One would be: what will the criteria for funding be? Also, will First Nation organizations be eligible? What about the francophone community? I'm sure these are all questions that the member can answer — and the government can also answer next session.

The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin also linked this to tourism and made a comment about tourism statistics. Last year, I personally travelled out to Alaska four different times — I was lucky enough to travel to Alaska four different times. I also travelled by air each time — by Air North, I might add — four times out and back from the Yukon to various places in Canada. So that is eight different times. The statistics that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is quoting and that the Minister for Tourism and Culture promotes, as well, would consider me a tourist each one of those times.

So thinking about how many Yukoners travel out of the territory by plane or by border crossing, these trips add up — so just in recognition that my stats do differ from the ones of the Yukon Party government.

Multicultural organizations — they already can apply for funding through CDF and other programs. I guess one of the questions would be, how much different will this program be from the funding that is allocated through that source?

The only final question would be, can the government provide a ballpark figure for what it has in mind for the proposal of the fund?

Once again, as the Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned, multicultural contributions are definitely something that all parties in this Legislative Assembly can get behind. I look forward to continued debate and I will definitely be supporting this motion.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Both as the Minister of Justice and Minister of Tourism and Culture, I've been fortunate enough to see many different cultural events in the territory and

indeed across Canada. I've also had many discussions with members from a variety of different cultural organizations within the territory, and I know that they would like to see the development of some type of multicultural program for festivals. Fostering an environment for new Yukoners to promote local festivals to celebrate and share their cultural diversity is something that many groups will feel very proud of. What I'm hearing is that there is a desire for local cultural associations to showcase who they are, where they came from and what's important to them and to their fellow Yukoners.

I've spoken in this House before about how we attract tourists and build upon our tourism economy in Yukon. I see such a program as yet another tool to build upon and complement other programs offered by the government. I'm quite proud of the fact that I belong to a party, the Yukon Party, that understands how important culture is to Yukon's tourism industry. In fact, many tourists come to Yukon to experience our cultural diversity.

The tourism industry in Yukon continues to see strong growth. I know the MLA for Klondike, the interim Liberal leader, has indicated that he believes our numbers have decreased. Yukon visitation stats from the 2012 visitor tracking program indicate that, since 2004, for the period June to September, visitation to Yukon has, in fact, increased 26 percent, which equates to an annualized growth rate of three percent per year. I've come to the conclusion that the MLA for Klondike is perhaps looking at the same visitor graphs that I am, but I suspect that he's looking at them upside-down.

I'm quite proud that Yukon is outperforming the Canadian average for growth in visitation. This seems to be a result of the very strategic and effective approach that the department and our tourism industry operators, tourism stakeholders and NGOs have taken with regard to marketing and investment decisions. I congratulate their efforts, as their hard work seems to be paying dividends.

We know that another key indicator for tourism statistics is information we receive from border crossings provided by CBSA. In fact, those stats remain the territory's most accurate indicator of visitors entering Yukon because of the reliability and the consistency in the way that CBSA has tracked crossings for well over 20 years.

We are aware that there is the potential for more than 3,500 Japanese visitors who will visit Yukon this year to experience Yukon's winter and northern lights. As our tourism numbers continue to grow, the need for more Yukon product is certainly going to be required. In fact, we are already seeing many people and businesses in the private sector continue to take advantage of different opportunities that our tourism sector presents — from aurora viewing to mountain biking, heli skiing and — yes — tours on the *SS Klondike* and *Dredge No. 4*.

It is clear that Yukon's tourism industry continues to grow and continues to offer great growth potential for the future. I've had several discussions with members of the Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese and other cultural communities who have inquired about government support for events that would assist them in celebrating their culture. Just a few

moments ago, I spoke about our increased visitation from Japan.

As the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin said, it would be interesting for a Japanese tourist visiting Yukon to experience a festival celebrating Japan's culture put on by a local Japanese association and then perhaps followed by a tour by a local company and viewing of the aurora borealis. As the member said, that is a tourism product that can sell itself.

Let's look at other potential cultures that could be celebrated here in the territory. Visitation from Germany continues to be Yukon's largest overseas market, capturing a significant portion of our overseas visitors. Condor brought over 4,000 visitors to Yukon this year, which contributes \$8 million to \$10 million to our economy. We are very fortunate because Whitehorse is the smallest city in North America with direct flights to Germany.

I'd like to extend my appreciation for our ongoing relationship and shared vision with Condor Airlines. I've had the opportunity to meet with officials from Condor a few times now. It would seem to me that they see an even greater potential in the Yukon-Germany market share.

I've heard time and time again that while our Yukon scenery is breathtaking, it is not always that that makes someone get in their car or book a flight here. In fact, it is often the fascinating stories of the people who live here and the people who continue to live here.

We know that over 100,000 people stop at our museums or cultural centres to learn about our history and our culture. In fact, Yukon Government's Beringia Interpretive Centre and the McBride Museum continue to be Yukon's most visited museums, with over 20,000 visitors per year. But for those who have moved to Yukon from abroad, I can only imagine how fascinated they are with our culture, with our rich mining history and with our landscapes. I also imagine that they would also like to share a piece of their culture, a piece of who they are, with their new friends and neighbours here in our territory.

Every day, cultural associations and organizations in Yukon help to make a positive difference for so many people. Whether it's through after-school care, recreation programs or assistance for new immigrants, these organizations are at the heart of our healthy and strong community.

On the Multicultural Centre of the Yukon's website, it states that they welcome immigrants to Canada and to the Yukon. They go on to say that, "It can be difficult adjusting to new life in a new country and a new community" and that the Multicultural Centre is there to help new citizens with that transition. Their website also indicates that "Settlement services in the Yukon are provided through the Multicultural Centre of the Yukon" and that their "services are available to assist in the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees into the social, economic, cultural, and political life in their community." The Multicultural Centre also specifies that they "can offer assistance and programs in the areas of settlement services, language instruction, employment services, and community networking" and that their free services include things like programs to help cope with

challenges of everyday living; an introduction to the local community; information regarding rights and responsibilities; to provide English classes and orientation and information workshops; referrals to government services; assistance in filing forms for social insurance numbers, drivers' licences and health care cards; referrals to doctors, dentists, lawyers and other services; employment sector information and programming; and other services to assist the newly arrived immigrant with their new Canadian lifestyle.

I know from speaking to several different cultural groups that they see great benefit in the work that the Multicultural Centre of Yukon provides. I'd like to extend my sincere appreciation to the staff and management at YTEC and the Multicultural Centre of Yukon. They are very highly regarded by our government caucus and so many other people in our community.

A community's culture is constantly changing as the inhabitants of that community change. We both define it and are defined by it. I think that there is merit in promoting and celebrating our diverse cultures. Setting up a new fund that can be accessed by new Yukoners to help showcase their culture would truly assist such groups in their efforts to show us who they are — to educate our community on their values and their beliefs. In fact, one definition of "culture" that I found reads: the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively; or the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or a society.

I also commend the good work of the Department of Tourism and Culture. Just this year the department has provided \$1.1 million in funding to 56 non-profit arts organizations and collectives. This funding enables visitors from around the world to enjoy and participate in artistic and cultural activities in 12 Yukon communities and locations. I see a new program such as this complementing other programs through a number of different departments.

I look at that and think to myself that that's great, but then I ask myself: is there a way that we can build upon that success? I believe that there is.

During my Tourism ministers meeting in September of 2013, we were focused on Canadian tourism competitiveness, and my ministerial colleagues and I discussed improving visitor access, marketing and tourism attraction development.

In October, Tourism Yukon hosted a networking event called "Food, Farms and Festivals" to discuss opportunities to develop culinary tourism here in our territory. The event was an unqualified success with 65 people registering to participate. Rarely do we hear of culinary tourism, but it turns out that this is an area that we can develop and grow in our territory.

Also supported by a \$200,000 contribution from the department, 80 Yukon performing, visual, literary, culinary and fashion arts were showcased at Northern Scene, a 10-day festival in Ottawa, featuring established and emerging artists from the north. This happened in April of this year. Part of that money went to promoting Yukoners' culinary arts in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone wonders about the emerging importance of culinary tourism, I would suggest that they check out the number of TV shows that showcase foods from around the world. Obviously there is a market of people interested in that.

Supporting by the department's touring artist fund, Yukon artists shared their talents with fellow Canadians and with audiences abroad in Australia, Belgium, China, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the U.S.

How? Through programs such as the arts operating funds, the special project funding, the touring artist fund, advanced artist funding, artist in the school program, Culture Quest and also dedicated funding for Yukon Arts Centre, the Dawson City Arts Society, Northern Cultural Expressions and the Yukon permanent art collection.

Funding programs available through the Cultural branch in Tourism and Culture are able to fund smaller components of the programs. The singing portion of the Filipino event is eligible for performing arts support. Other festivals may be eligible for support for their cuisine component; however, other aspects of the festival may not currently qualify for assistance.

The government continues to receive requests for assistance, but Yukon does not seem to have a funding program to address some specific requests. The motion before us today speaks to that matter.

I did some reading on the Government of Canada's website about the value and merit of multiculturalism. Did you know that Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy? The government of the day did so because they wanted to affirm the value and dignity of all Canadian citizens, regardless of their racial or ethnic origins, their language or their religious affiliation.

Multiculturalism is designed to be a positive, accepting experience in that citizens are encouraged to share their history. New Canadians are not asked to deny or reject their past, their heritage or ancestry, or their identity. In fact, acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. Through multiculturalism, Canada recognizes the potential of all Canadians, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs.

Believe it or not, I suspect that some people don't take the creation of a fund to support multiculturalism seriously enough to debate it in this Legislature. In fact, that's what I read on social media last night on the Facebook page of the Leader from the Official Opposition — the MLA for Whitehorse Centre. That's unfortunate, but it doesn't surprise me. It's reassuring to me that my Yukon Party caucus colleagues support multiculturalism in our territory.

Personally, I see this motion before us as a way to promote values related to all of the different cultures in our territory. I will be supporting this motion and I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this motion forward.

Ms. Stick: It's nice to have an opportunity to get up and speak. I just want to point out that the leader also had her moment to debate this motion and did so with eloquence. I want to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing forth this motion and I just want to reread it:

"THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a funding program to promote local festivals celebrating multicultural diversity, including celebrating the contributions of new Yukoners."

I'm not going to speak about tourism. I'm going to speak about our communities and how we are all a part of the multicultural fabric of our communities. We all are members of that. I believe that we should always be supporting festivals and programs that encourage all of us to share our cultures with each other, to celebrate our diversity, and to participate in festivals of arts, of music, of food, of celebration. It's something I personally feel strongly about.

This is our community. It's made up of many cultures, new and old. We think about the gold rush, or First Nations who were here, and then there was contact with Europeans. I remember reading once in the history of the gold rush how a group of Maoris came from New Zealand for the gold rush, how a black family from the south in the United States came up here to be a part of the gold rush and the community — and some of them stayed. We've had multiculturalism in the Yukon for a long time.

I support funding for local festivals that celebrate diversity that include the contributions of new Yukoners. I celebrate that. I support this motion. I'm not sure we need to create a new funding mechanism. Maybe we just need to enhance what we already have.

We have a community development fund that supports festivals and groups participating in community events. We have the Minister of Tourism and Culture, who spoke about the arts grants and how those are available to all Yukoners. I don't think we should set aside other funding that just targets multiculturalism. Multiculturalism should be in all of those funding mechanisms that are now available to all Yukoners, new and old, regardless of their cultural background.

So, enhance those — make them better. I don't think we need to separate out something new and say, okay, you're a multicultural event, so you should go over here. Let's just make it a part of the funding, CDF, arts, culture — all of those things already exist. If they need enhancing and if the rules need to change to allow a broader group to be able to access those funds, then make those changes.

I'm not going to suggest any amendments, I'm not going to say much more, but I agree with this. I support multiculturalism. It's what makes our community exciting. It's what makes our neighbourhoods interesting. It's our neighbours. It's the people we work with. It's the people we do our recreation with. Multiculturalism is wonderful.

I'll end with yes, it was the federal Government of Canada that first recognized this and that's great. But I think we should be demanding of them that they not be cutting funding to events and supports of multiculturalism across

Canada and not just the Yukon. I think it's important that the federal government maintain that level or increase that level of funding, not be cutting back on it.

Mr. Speaker, I support this motion because I do believe in celebrating our diversity. We're all diverse. It is a multicultural society. I don't think we need to develop a new funding program, but I do think we could perhaps enhance or broaden the scope of current funding programs to make sure that everyone in the Yukon has an opportunity to be a part of our multicultural diversity and celebration.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: First of all, I would like to thank the members opposite for their support of the motion that has been put forth by my colleague, the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin. I would like to thank members for the opportunity to say a few words here.

I'm not going to go on too long here because I think we would like to bring this to a vote here eventually before the end of the day. But I would like to say a few words here.

I think when it comes to the territory — and this has been said perhaps already a couple of times — the diversity and the face of the territory has changed significantly over the years and that's a good thing. From the days when I was growing up in Watson Lake to where we are today, our population has grown in leaps and bounds and the diversity within our population has also grown significantly. I think it has made us a very rich territory in so many different aspects.

I want to reflect on some friends who became friends. They were newcomers to the Yukon about 11 years ago. It was just shortly after I got elected.

The husband is from Colombia and his wife is from Argentina and they just had a child at that time, who was born in the Yukon. The young girl is best friends with my young son and I can tell you that we have learned so much from that particular family. We have learned so much about the definition of generosity and outreach in our community and we have just learned so much about how lucky we are to live in Canada and to live here in the Yukon.

This family has expanded our networks of friends throughout the city and elsewhere because of the celebrations that they have. We were just at their daughter's ninth birthday celebration and it was a Latino party and it was a fantastic display. I haven't been to that vibrant and fun of a party as that was on Saturday. The diversity in the room too was from friends from Quebec who just recently made the Yukon their home. We're seeing so many new francophone citizens make the Yukon their home from Quebec and all parts of the country, but from France as well and other parts of the world. That, too, is really making our territory a much stronger place as a result of that as well.

You see it within the francophone community and the programs being offered and the celebrations being offered. Indeed it is fantastic to see.

This family, though, getting back to my original story — I am always in awe of just how much engagement they have. They have gone ice fishing. They go ice fishing. They have gone on bison hunts. They have done a lot of winter camping.

They have just experienced everything and more that the Yukon has to offer compared to a lot of us in the Yukon who perhaps haven't even experienced half of what they have — but that's how much they embrace their love of the north and the love of the people here. It is a two-way street.

For that reason I think that this motion does speak to the territory and the diversity in our territory. I think that thanks to immigration, we enjoy a very rich cultural life in the Yukon, and our workforce, our neighbourhoods and our schools are diverse places and, as I said, the territory is better off as a result of that.

We're both better off economically and socially as well. I was just reflecting on a document here, albeit a couple of years old. It was talking about some data — I think dating back to 2010 — and it suggested that the reason that Yukon enjoys such a high rate of immigrant retention in the territory is because recent immigrants stay for the good jobs and because they feel welcome in the Yukon. Many of these immigrants also stay because of community and family ties as well. That is very important to mention as well.

When we are able to celebrate our diversity through festivals, through different multicultural events — and there have been a lot over the years. There was a heritage festival that was brought about by one specific individual about five years ago — the first one that was held — and she did an amazing job. I recall going to every year of that festival, and it grew. I remember the second one — I think it was about three or four years ago — and there was actually a parade, and in this parade I remember everyone gathered at the Old Fire Hall at the end of this parade. There were some — I counted 23 different nationalities represented within this parade, from the Ukraine to the Philippines to Germany to Vietnam, and the list goes on. I was just astounded to see that many nationalities being represented — we know that there is more than that, of course — and the pride showcased in events like a parade or a fashion show. I remember being up at the Yukon Arts Centre and going to this other subsequent heritage festival, and they had a fashion show. They had also different tastes from different countries available. It was an amazing, fantastic display of talent and of pride among us, as Yukoners.

The thing about the Yukon — as is reflected in this report — is that it is welcomed, it is embraced by Yukoners and, as a result, that has made us a stronger territory as well.

I know the Member for Riverdale South made reference to whether or not this is going to be a separate funding program. I just wanted to reflect that there are funding mechanisms out there. There is the Culture Quest arts fund. The Minister of Tourism and Culture made reference to the touring artist fund. There are a number of different funding mechanisms available. That may be reflected under an existing fund with an extension of eligibility criteria. The point is, though, to have a separate mechanism to reflect upon the importance of the multicultural community and to be able to support events and festivals in the territory — that's a very important thing.

As the territory grows, so too does the demand for these funds. When I was Minister of Tourism and Culture, I was

very proud to be able to announce a very large funding boost to the Yukon arts fund and the arts funding program. We also introduced the touring artist fund at that time as well. It really significantly lifted the capacity and we also were able to add additional dollars to programs being delivered by the Dawson City Arts Society as well.

There has been a lot done from that time and ever since to grow and to meet the demands of our growing population as well.

This particular motion speaks to a specific funding mechanism that would support a growing multicultural society. I do think that it is great. In terms of doing so, we will be able to also meet a significant objective of our immigration strategy. That is to really increase the awareness of the territory as a desirable location to work and live, and that is applicable to all sectors, all different segments of our population outside of the territory.

When we can celebrate and welcome, you nurture those feelings and the attachment to a place. A significant amount of research has gone into branding strategies on how you can actually reach out and connect with travelling populations or individuals. When you meet that connection, you're able to actually make them want to come to the Yukon as a destination. Whether you visit, whether you do business here, whether you decide to establish the Yukon as your home and raise your family — these are all great attributes.

The other thing I wanted to say is that the Government of Yukon, this government, has really invested wholeheartedly in many different cultural venues in support of these festivals and events that we continue to hold and continue to grow in the territory.

From support for our museums to each of the Yukon First Nation cultural centres, we have a new funding mechanism that supports the operations of those facilities and also supports some capital investments in each of those as well. It is very important to be able to have those venues available to be able to celebrate our diversity.

The Old Fire Hall is a perfect example of a facility, a historic site or a historic building, that really took shape and form as a result of the Canada Winter Games in 2007. That's what really gave it its launch. Afterward there was a real pitch among the business community and the artistic community, cultural community and the Yukon government to come together and to be able to develop the Old Fire Hall as a cultural venue.

Since then we've seen other places — we've seen a whole variety of private galleries evolve in the territory. We've seen the School of Visual Arts through Dawson in partnership with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Dawson City Arts Society. All of these speak to the importance of being able to celebrate and being able to share our stories — the good, the bad and everything in-between.

We do have a lot of history and it's what makes the Yukon, I say, the greatest place on earth to live. Again, I just commend this motion to the Assembly. I just want to again thank my colleague from Old Crow for bringing this forward and for taking an opportunity to reflect upon the many people

who have chosen to make Yukon their home after all this time and who have contributed to making our lives the better for it as well.

Mr. Barr: I would like to start off by thanking the member from Old Crow for bringing forward this motion. I will be supporting this motion. I do believe that multiculturalism and honouring multiculturalism is really about respect although, yes, there are spin-offs. There is community well-being that brings community together to help us to understand and respect each other, whether it's our customs or just to be able to look at one another walking down the street and say hello when you're doing that. That's part of my culture growing up. Why I like and love and live in the Yukon is because we still do that here. In big cities, oftentimes, saying hello to somebody on the street is not accepted. It's more of a culture of fear, of protecting yourself. So here in the Yukon, welcoming new people — I was at the swearing-in of the Canadian citizenship just a couple of weeks ago, where there were 81 new people from 33 different countries — many of the new cultures that have been spoken of here today — from the Filipino community, from Germany — although many Germans have been here — but more different Asian countries — Japanese — who have chosen the Yukon to be their home.

Because time is so short, sitting here and listening to the debate today really brought up a lot of different emotions about multiculturalism. The initial words that came to me is that it really does start with respect. I was thinking that not long ago, the potlatch was outlawed, the drum was outlawed here. You could go to jail — it was against the law to practice aboriginal culture in the Yukon and right across Canada.

So it made me have these mixed feelings — or reminiscing — of speaking your own language and what happened in residential schools. We've come a long way when we we're standing here today to say that we want to put forward some dollars to help people of their culture, who are new to the Yukon, to be able to share that with us. That is great and I wholeheartedly agree with that.

At the same time, I want to emphasize that, for aboriginal people of the north, when we are talking about our culture and being able to share our culture, when we're looking at what programs are available — at WCC, for example — and the fight that still exists today to honour those cultures within the programs, we cannot forget that we need to be doing this right across. When we talk about developing the curriculum in our schools to respect culture, and to be able to remember — when we are talking about dollars in this House, that we — whether it's programming at WCC, curriculum in our schools or honouring First Nation final agreements — are looking at creating opportunities and goodwill in our lives for the betterment of all of us to be able to work toward a better place — a community where we respect each other on all levels, in all our relationships and in all of the departments. I think of silos that happen in our departments — to break that down.

These are words we have to develop in order to just be able to be respectful of each other in how we go about our daily business.

I will definitely be recommending that we go forward with this. I do think that, when I think of Canada Day, we do have all cultures represented — the new and the old. I think it's incumbent upon the organizers of these festivities to make sure that when we are doing these things we have these be inclusive, like our Canada Day celebrations where I see the Filipino community dancing and sharing food. You can go around the park and you can eat food from everybody that makes food here, wherever you come from.

Although these things are here, we can enhance them. I do think that the Member for Riverdale, in thinking about that — enhancing what we do have out there. We do have many mechanisms out there that already allow this. I do think it's worthwhile speaking of multiculturalism, period.

In my words today, I'm hoping that when we do think of multiculturalism, whether its Health and Social Services, again, I think back to where we have to learn and how we go forward with respecting culture as caregivers, as legislators — that we remember that in all of these areas.

I just see the time. I'm going to sit down. I really want to be able to say a lot more about this and how it relates to our society today and how we could be doing more, but I will sit down and hopefully we'll get to vote.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Elias: I appreciate all the members that spoke today in support of this motion. I think it's important to recognize that this is going to be in addition to other funding programs, and that it's going to be specific and responsive to the requests of the multicultural diversity we have in our territory.

I want to close quickly with my own story of sharing in culture that I experienced this summer. I did mention this to the Minister of Environment earlier on in this sitting. I travel up to the southern portion of my riding on the Dempster Highway three or four times a year. This summer in particular, all of the campgrounds were full with European tourists. I never did see that before.

I went all the way up to the Northwest Territories border and I was staying at the Rock River campground and meeting people; walking to the various campgrounds meeting people. I ended up meeting a husband and wife who were from Germany right at the border. They were looking at the vistas and there were some caribou and grizzly bears in the valley and there were some Gwich'in elders up on the side of the hill picking berries from Fort McPherson. I just came from visiting with them and they were sitting up on the side of the mountain there. Three elders — women — were picking berries. When I walked back down to the road this couple from Germany were wondering what those elderly ladies were doing up on the side of the mountain so I said, "Come on, come up I'll show you, I'll introduce you to them." They had broken English, the people from Germany, the husband and

wife. They weren't fluent at all, but I took them up there and right away those elders just embraced them. They were picking berries and they shared their culture and they told stories to this couple about before the highway was there. They shared their tea and their bannock and their dried fish and dried caribou meat with them. It was just such an enlightening and such an enriching experience for that couple.

Later on that night, back at the campground, they came over to my campsite and they just couldn't thank me enough for just taking the time to walk them up to those elders so that they could have that experience. They said they are going to come back to the Yukon and they are going to tell some friends.

That's just the type of culture, through this motion, that I want all of our citizens and visitors to experience when they come to our great territory. So these are the types of things that make this job as MLA worthwhile. I hope to see this come to fruition and I hope that in the 2014-15 budget I see a bullet under the Tourism and Culture vote that expresses the new mandate for the Minister of Tourism and Culture to proceed in implementing this motion on the floor of the House today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, everybody in the House.

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. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 532 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.