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34th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, October 23, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2019 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Ted Adel | Copperbelt North |
| Paolo Gallina | Porter Creek Centre |
| Don Hutton | Mayo-Tatchun |

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Kate White | Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King |
| Liz Hanson | Whitehorse Centre |

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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| Deputy Clerk | Linda Kolody |
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| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, October 23, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon foster families and extended families

Hon. Ms. Frost: I rise in the House today on behalf our Liberal government to acknowledge National Foster Family Appreciation Week, which takes place this week from October 20 to 26.

On Saturday night, I was fortunate enough to have been invited to a dinner and appreciation event celebrating foster parents and extended family care providers. As I did that night, today I wish to recognize the 55 Yukon foster families and the 126 extended family members in Whitehorse and across the Yukon who provide out-of-home care to children in need so that parents, grandparents, and guardians can focus on their healing journeys.

Together, let's celebrate all caregivers — the uncles, the aunts, the cousins, and the grandparents — who have stepped forward to open their homes and create a safe and nurturing environment. Let's celebrate those non-family members who offer a safe place for children in need. These individuals have chosen to open their hearts and homes to children whose own families are temporarily unable to look after them. By doing so, they are helping to build strong communities in which they can foster healthy children and youth.

Fostering is primarily about helping children return to their own home or to move to a new permanent home, if necessary. The foster extended family helps children maintain contact with their own family and culture. Families play a very important role. They are the keepers and transmitters of our culture and our language and they keep our communities alive and vibrant. This is why, by opening your home, you are making a difference. A healthy and committed relationship between a child, their caregiver — whether a foster parent or an extended family caregiver — and their family, their community, and their First Nation all lay the foundation for the child's healthy future, success, and happiness.

Thank you most sincerely to all caregivers, extended family caregivers, and foster families for your dedication, commitment, and support that you provide to Yukon children and families on a daily basis. Your efforts are recognized and appreciated.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition during National Foster Family Appreciation Week to pay tribute to Yukon foster families and extended families. The work that they do to provide stable and caring homes to Yukon children is instrumental to our social network across the territory. Foster families open their homes and their lives to children in order to provide them with the stability, security, and care that they may have not had the opportunity to experience otherwise.

There are so many situations and circumstances that influence whether a child or youth requires care outside of their families. Some foster families offer respite care, looking after children for a short period of time, and others foster children full-time. There are Yukoners who have continued to open their homes to children for many years. If you were to ask one of these families why they continue to care for kids, they will tell you about the fulfillment each placement brings, about the attachment and bonds they form with these children, and about how difficult it is to imagine not having these kids as part of their lives. It is not an easy job, and we extend our sincere thanks to those who do it. It takes selflessness and dedication. It takes patience and understanding.

If Yukoners are interested in becoming part of the foster family program, your assistance and dedication is always needed and always appreciated. Whether you are available for short- or long-term assistance, there is an opportunity to help Yukon children and families, and we encourage you to learn more and to get involved.

Thank you to those who step up to take care of children and young family members who need it, whatever the reason. Families across the Yukon open their homes, hearts, and lives to children, and it's important that they receive the recognition they truly deserve for going above and beyond for their community.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to foster families during National Foster Family Appreciation Week. Fostering a child is an act of faith, love, hope, and perseverance — bringing a child into your family and your life, while providing them with stability and emotional support when, through no fault of their own, they find themselves in crisis. This transition isn't always easy for anyone and it requires faith that things will improve. Foster families are motivated by a love and dedication to children, to their families, and to their communities around them. There is always the hope that your home won't be needed and that children and youth won't require a safe place to land, but knowing that you are there and ready with open arms is a comfort that we don't take for granted. These community heroes know that the needs of the child should come first and foremost in any decision about the child, so they persevere and fight for the rights of the child.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken liberties with a Witcraft quote that I believe is ideal for foster families and extended family

caregivers: When history looks back at you, it won't matter what your bank balance was, how new your car was or the kind of the house you lived in, but know that the world is a different place because you were important in the life of a child.

So, we would like to thank all of those individuals and families throughout Yukon who step forward to offer a home, support, love, and guidance to children and youth in need of a safe place to land.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling this afternoon a legislative return responding to a motion put forward by the Member for Lake Laberge.

Ms. White: I have for tabling a poster from the Queen's Printer Agency.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse to enable Yukon residents to pay City of Whitehorse parking tickets at the Motor Vehicles branch or at territorial agents in order to allow them to renew vehicle registration.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to fulfill its election promise to eliminate the Yukon small business tax.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow through with its platform commitments to:

(1) support municipalities in development of community plans and use those plans to inform the direction of community development;

(2) assist communities in developing mining within municipality policies that respect the needs of all residents, while providing certainty for the land user and compensation where appropriate for miners;

(3) expand existing campground infrastructure;

(4) support necessary investments in basic community infrastructure that are needed to support communities and industry; and

(5) reduce community reliance on diesel energy.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with local producers to expand Yukon's agricultural industry and improve northern food security.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party to confirm a date for when they would like to meet with the Premier to discuss electoral reform.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct a forensic audit into the finances of Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services from 2017 to 2019.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Home retrofit loan program

Hon. Mr. Streicker: As noted in the Speech from the Throne, our Liberal government will be introducing an energy retrofit loan program that will allow Yukoners to achieve increased energy-efficiency savings in private residences and commercial buildings. The Government of Yukon is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change. One important way that we can do this is to help Yukon property owners in their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint.

For most of us who live here in the north, heating our homes is expensive and it often involves the use of fossil fuels. Maximizing energy efficiency in our homes will reduce carbon emissions and make life more affordable. However, having the ready cash to make necessary improvements is not something that is possible for everyone. While we do have programs that provide rebates for a portion of retrofit work through the Energy Solutions Centre, the total cost of such projects can exceed a property owner's budget. As a result, we may be missing our energy-efficiency targets because people cannot afford the substantial cost, even with these incentives.

We have seen how successful the domestic water well program and the rural electrification and telecommunications program have been. These programs provide long-term, low-interest financing for projects that might otherwise be unfeasible for people who want to access them. Hundreds of Yukon families have benefitted from these programs that are repaid through local improvement charges added to their annual property tax bill. Property owners repay their loan annually at the same time as they pay their property taxes with a local improvement charge, and we are looking at how to extend this approach to include retrofits. Spread out over five, 10, or 15 years — and with reduced fuel bills — retrofits for residential and commercial buildings would become much more affordable and accessible. A new loan program for energy retrofits for Yukon homes will be an important tool for the

average Yukon homeowner in the battle to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, we are currently analyzing what types of projects have the best energy-efficiency return on investment for homeowners without creating an unreasonable tax burden. It will be important to ensure that the new program is fully integrated with other retrofit and renovation programs. The Energy Solutions Centre and the Property Assessment and Taxation branch of Community Services are partnering on this new program to maximize benefits to building owners while keeping the process simple for Yukoners wishing to participate. We will be amending the *Assessment and Taxation Act* and adding regulations to expand the definition of “local improvement charges”.

Municipalities, as local tax authorities, are important partners in any local improvement charge program. We are working toward a program for next year and will engage municipal partners and the public to help shape the program and delivery model in a way that benefits all Yukoners and minimizes the administrative burden on municipalities.

The long-term outcomes of this new program will provide benefits on many fronts: reducing our carbon footprint, reducing the cost to heat homes and buildings, and increasing the number of local retrofit jobs. Our first investments into retrofits were through government buildings. Now we are using infrastructure dollars to help municipalities and First Nations to retrofit their buildings. This next step will allow us to get at residential and commercial buildings as well. This is just one of the ways that our Liberal government is working to address climate change.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement today — although I do have to say the ministerial statement does seem a little premature and doesn't seem to provide much new from the Speech from the Throne. We do appreciate the update, however.

The minister referenced that they will be amending the *Assessment and Taxation Act* and bringing in new regulations and that this may impact municipalities. So the Liberal government is off-loading costs and responsibilities to municipal governments. Well, let's hope that they support them financially.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, retrofits and energy efficiencies are a key component of any climate change and energy strategy to help us reduce our carbon footprint and, in the case of Yukon, help us reduce the demand on the electrical grid. This is particularly important today with the Yukon Territory growing and energy demands increasing.

In addition to the retrofits, one project that the government is currently pursuing and is consulting on as part of their future energy strategy is the Southern Lakes enhancement project. Last week, Yukon Energy conducted a presentation at the Marsh Lake community centre with residents who would be impacted by their proposal to raise the levels of the Southern Lakes. This is a proposal that the previous government had conducted on, but they had heard loud and clear from Southern

Lakes residents they didn't want this to go forward. The Liberal government, however, has launched a new round of consultations to move forward with this project despite strong opposition in the previous consultations. Last week, residents were concerned about the effects that the increased lake levels will have on their property values and the erosion of their properties.

One of the frustrations that came out of the meeting last week was that residents felt they already said no, and they were wondering how many times they would have to say no. The minister was in attendance at the meeting, and I do note that at one point he was point-blank asked by members of the public whether or not the government can or will just pull the plug on this project. The constituent pointed out that the government had heard opposition to the proposed thermal generation facility and they pulled the plug on that. “So why don't they listen to the residents of the Southern Lakes and do the same here?” they wondered. At the public meeting last Wednesday, the minister didn't answer the question, but we're hoping he will here today.

When the minister gets up, I'm hoping that he can tell us now if he supports the Southern Lakes enhancement project and I'm hoping that he can tell us whether or not the Liberal government will listen to the residents of Southern Lakes who are saying no to this project.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP are supportive of programs that assist Yukoners, improve their homes' energy efficiency, and reduce their carbon footprints.

At this point in time, a homeowner may apply for a home improvement loan for up to \$50,000 through the Yukon Housing Corporation to improve, among other things, energy efficiency. How will this new loan program be different? Is this existing loan program at risk of being replaced?

We would like the minister to tell us how much more money a homeowner will be able to borrow under this new program. Will it be strictly restricted to energy projects? Will it cover the costs of alternative heating systems like electrical thermal storage units or air-source heat pumps? What will the payback of the loan look like? Will it be similar to the one at Yukon Housing where the loan is amortized over 15 years in five-year terms with interest rates of bank prime plus one percent? If not, how will it be different?

What happens if a homeowner decides to sell? Presumably they are selling for a higher price due to the improvements, but does the new homeowner assume both the remaining debt of the local improvement charge while also paying for the improvements?

The minister has said that his government is working toward a program for next year, and this is great news, as I can attest that doing an energy retrofit to your home certainly changes your carbon footprint. We ask: When next year will this program be available?

The minister has also said that this new program will allow homeowners to repay their loan annually at the same time as they pay their annual property taxes with a local improvement

charge, similar to the domestic well water program and the rural electrification and telecommunications program.

Mr. Speaker, local improvement charges are a municipal jurisdiction but Yukon government has said that they will — and I'm quoting: "... engage municipal partners and the public to help shape the program and delivery model in a way that benefits all Yukoners and minimizes the administrative burden on municipalities." Mr. Speaker, when will this happen? We would like to know about the conversations the minister has had with the municipalities to date. What municipalities has he met with about this new program and when? What do they think of this proposed arrangement?

Mr. Speaker, if he hasn't yet had these conversations, when does the minister plan on having these conversations? It's important to note that municipalities are important to this plan — critical, in fact — for they are the ones who must collect and administer this proposed new program.

We wonder why the minister hasn't already brought forward the changes to the *Assessment and Taxation Act* and regulations that would allow this program to move forward as he has laid out.

Mr. Speaker, does this mean that we can expect these legislative changes in the spring? If these are changes that are required for municipalities to collect loan repayment, will this program be up and running in time for next year's construction season?

Mr. Speaker, we're happy to respond to the statement about what may or may not be a future retrofit program. So in the esteemed words of Aubrey Graham: "When I hear 'em talking, I just don't know what to make of it..."

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would like to thank the members opposite, because both parties have stated that retrofits are a good thing, and that's great. I think we all agree here in the Legislature. Sometimes when we stand up, we're told, oh, this is too late, it's already something that has happened. This time, when we're standing up to try to give some indication of the direction we're heading, we're told both that it's too early and that we're not giving enough information early enough.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker. I hope we're trying to strike the right balance.

I agree with the Member for Kluane that we don't want to off-load costs. We do need to work with municipalities — that's very important — and so we're using the model of the rural well program as an example, because we don't want to add administrative burden to municipalities without providing them some resources. That is all part of the conversation.

I will just try to correct one small thing. I believe that it was the Yukon Energy board that decided not to go ahead with the thermal plant, but I will ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources if he can respond if I have that wrong.

I believe as well that this is about — so, in responding to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, this is about energy retrofits. It's not, for example, about kitchens. It is about much more than what the loan program is today. The great news is that, when you attach it to a local improvement charge, it stays

with the property itself so that, if a building is sold, then the improvement is sold with the building, as well as the responsibility to pay it back over time. That's what makes it a really elegant solution.

All the details about interest rates, et cetera — that is all part of that conversation that is to be worked out between now — we are working to try to bring legislation in for this spring. This is why I'm standing up here and letting legislators know about this. We're working with municipalities. I have had some preliminary conversations with municipalities up to this point, but they have just been highlighting that we want to head in this direction. From here, we will start to have the more in-depth conversations about how the program will work.

By the way, we are also tax collectors. I mean, not that this is a happy thing to say for many Yukoners, but out there in rural Yukon, it is us as a government that will be administering this program. So it is both the municipalities and us, as a territorial government — we will want to try to work on this project together. I'm looking forward to it. I think that once we bring it in through the Legislature, through legislation and regulations, we will make it accessible for all Yukoners.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Electoral reform

Mr. Hassard: Earlier this year, the Liberals unilaterally appointed a committee on electoral reform in an attempt to stack the deck in their favour. The Liberals gave themselves the sole authority for the selection of the committee members and the decision-making in the process over changes to the way we vote.

In August, the chair of the Liberals' hand-picked panel quit. The Premier claimed the process was halted because of the chair resigning. But earlier this Sitting, it was revealed that the Premier kept the chair's resignation secret for 32 days. So why would the Liberals keep the secret for so long? Yesterday it was revealed it was because they were in damage control. The former Clerk of the Assembly wrote to the Speaker of this House and to the Members' Services Board to indicate that the Liberals' approach to electoral reform was undermining the foundations of our democracy.

Will the Premier admit that it was this letter that caused him to shut down the electoral reform process?

Hon. Mr. Silver: No, that was not it. For the record, that letter went out to all parties in the Legislative Assembly and we have had a very thorough conversation about this among leaders as far as our interpretation versus theirs. I definitely respect the opinion of the former Clerk, but at the same time, this Legislative Assembly does have the proper committees — the proper authorities — to make changes to anything that we would do here in the Legislative Assembly. If a recommendation came in from an independent committee or an independent MLA or a member of the general public, there are obviously going to be practices that would have to be invoked that are in the Standing Orders, that are in the committees, that are readily available for this hallowed hall.

Mr. Hassard: I think that the Premier should correct the record. I don't recall ever having that conversation, and I don't believe the Leader of the Third Party has either.

As we have discussed previously, the Premier has gone to enormous lengths to prevent a written record on his electoral reform process that stacks the deck in favour of the Liberal Party. Of course, the Liberal approach not only skirts around access to information legislation, but it ensures that no one knows why or how decisions to change the way we vote were decided.

The Liberals have now had to hit the pause button on electoral reform. We now see that the reason for this is that the former Clerk of the Assembly wrote to the Speaker on August 2. The letter went to the Members' Services Board, of which the Liberals hold the majority and which the Premier sits on.

I would like to quote from that letter. It goes on to say — and I quote: “No one party should, therefore, be allowed to control the reform process or the outcome.”

So, Mr. Speaker, what did the Premier do with the letter that he received on August 2?

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are members of the members' services committee. Without indulging in the confidential agendas, it wasn't me who put it on the agenda, but it was opposition who put this very issue on the agenda to speak about in the Members' Services Board. So, it's interesting to see the tack from the Yukon Party now — to pretend as if this is something new that they haven't heard of or that we haven't discussed. That is completely untrue, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have reached out to the opposition. We want to engage with them on how to move forward. The federal election is over. That is what we were waiting for. We are now waiting for the opposition members to re-invoke — we would like to come down, sit down, and talk with those members opposite, because we do believe that there are some great suggestions from both members opposite about how we can get this committee back on track.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: If the former Leader of the Third Party would listen to my responses as opposed to trying to talk over me as I say it, then she would actually know that we are waiting for that meeting and I would love to book that meeting — even today, if we could.

Mr. Hassard: I have no idea how the federal election could play into this, but maybe we will find out in the next answer. Mr. Speaker, this letter was 10 pages long, and I encourage all Yukoners to read it. The letter states that the Liberal electoral reform process undermines the Legislature. It says — and I quote: “... the electoral reform process infringes on the Legislative Assembly's fundamental right to govern its own proceedings.”

In the letter, the former Clerk indicates that he will be willing to meet with the Members' Services Board to discuss these matters further. With such a damning letter indicating that the Legislative Assembly would be undermined by the Liberals, I would think that the MSB would want to meet as

soon as possible to discuss this letter. As you know, Mr. Speaker, this Liberal-controlled committee is chaired by a Liberal MLA, so it would be interesting to know if they met with the former Clerk to discuss this.

Can the Premier tell us: When he received this letter, did he ask the Department of Justice for a legal analysis?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the letter from the former Clerk talks about changes to the Legislative Assembly that would come out of the recommendations of an independent committee. We have had this conversation — I have had this conversation. I have all the confidence in the world that the structures that are set up here in the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly are more than able, with all-party committees, to address any recommendation of a change of the procedures that we do inside the Legislative Assembly, which is one of four of the considerations of electoral reform.

So please, Mr. Speaker — I would love to have that conversation. I would love to sit down with the members opposite and talk about — because we did listen to the former chair and said we would press pause and we would allow — because there is a federal election going on — to wait while we decide what to do with the new position. But in the interim, I am more than willing and able to sit down with the members opposite and to talk to them about how we move forward.

Again, I have heard on the floor of the Legislative Assembly from members opposite some great suggestions, and I am willing to sit down and listen to those from both parties. I am all ears, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Electoral reform

Mr. Cathers: The letter from the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly is a powerful indictment of the Liberals' approach to electoral reform. So far, the Premier has dismissed our concerns with his one-party-decides-all approach, but he can't just dismiss this letter.

Democracy belongs to all Yukoners, not just to the Liberal Party. To quote from the letter from the long-serving former Clerk: “The Liberals has established the timeline for the commission, its terms of reference, its membership, arranged for its administrative assistance and determined its budget.”

To top it off, if there is ever a deadlock on the commission, the Deputy Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office, who reports to the Premier and serves at his pleasure, gets the final say. Simply put, the Liberals rigged the game. They made the rules, they appointed the players, and the referee works for the Premier.

Now that the Liberals have been caught, will they finally agree to a truly non-partisan process that fairly involves all political parties?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I have heard from the member opposite that he won't criticize the public body, but it seems to me that he is accusing the Deputy Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office of somehow having some kind of political sway. He is dangerously close to countering the remarks that he has made in the Legislative Assembly before. I would urge him not to.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we could have this debate over and over again. We have heard this from the members opposite before in the Legislative Assembly. What I would like is to sit down with the two leaders and have this conversation about how we move forward to get this process back online.

At this point, we have paused the work of the independent commission while we work with the opposition parties to set a path forward. I have notified the opposition party leaders of the resignation and asked them to meet me in the coming weeks. Once the independent committee is re-established, we will be in a position to set timelines and to work on what we need to work on to move forward and to take the suggestions from the members opposite. Maybe they don't want to sit down with me, Mr. Speaker. Maybe they have already made up their minds about electoral reform. I would like to know why we can't get this conversation going with the three leaders where we can have that conversation about great suggestions from the members opposite to make sure that we get back on track with this commission.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the Premier keeps dismissing what we tell him. The letter from the long-serving former Clerk of the Assembly is quite clear that the Liberals' process is unfair and undermines the Legislature. It is a damning indictment of the Premier's approach to electoral reform and it should be concerning for any Yukoners concerned with the fairness of our electoral process. It highlights how the government is undermining the Legislature and has designed a process that is fundamentally unfair.

The letter from the former Clerk also questions if the Liberal government even had the authority to establish the commission. The letter specifically states — quote: "The government needs to explain why it did not follow a similar approach with regard to an electoral reform commission, i.e. introduce amendments to the *Elections Act* to provide for the creation of such a commission. This would have not only established a commission process clearly founded in law but would have also allowed the Legislative Assembly to publicly debate the electoral reform commission proposal prior to the commission's establishment."

Will the Premier explain why the government did not follow this approach?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have to agree to disagree with the member opposite and also the former Clerk. We are not suggesting that the independent commission would be the ones who would invoke change in the Legislative Assembly. That absolutely is not what we're saying. What we're saying is with any recommendation, whether it came from individual Yukoners or an NGO or members of this Legislative Assembly, there is a process. There is a process to deal with that. That process is to make sure that we invoke the committees of the Legislative Assembly, and we would absolutely do that.

I appreciate the letter from the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. I appreciate the dialogue that we had in an all-party committee of the Members' Services Board with the members opposite. They make it seem like they just got a hold of a letter, but this letter they have had in their hands for a

long time and we've had a discussion at Members' Services Board about this.

Mr. Speaker, electoral reform is an extremely important issue to many Yukoners. We have heard this while campaigning and we are taking the concerns of Yukoners seriously. We have committed to strike a commission on electoral reform and to consult with Yukoners on possible changes on how Yukoners cast their ballots and we remain committed to this process. We have responded to the letters from the members opposite. The ball is in their court — that letter was hand-delivered, by the way, as well — and we would love to sit down with the members opposite and have that conversation together outside of the Legislative Assembly in the offices so that we can move forward and make a decision on how this committee gets back on track.

Mr. Cathers: Contrary to the Premier's spin, he knows that we've been very clear in all venues and meetings about our views on electoral reform and our concerns with their approach. The letter from the long-serving former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly is very clear that the Liberal government overstepped their authorities and are on very dangerous ground when it comes to one political party interfering in the electoral process. It is a damning indictment of the Premier's approach to this issue.

The letter states — quote: "... the conduct of elections is not a matter that falls within the authority of cabinet. In a constitutional democracy there are limits to the power of cabinet. The conduct of elections falls outside those limits." And "... No one party, even if it is the party of cabinet, should control the electoral reform process because it has a vested interest in the outcome of elections." This is what the Yukon Party Official Opposition has been saying all along. Simply put, the Liberals are undermining not only the Legislature but the integrity of the process.

Mr. Speaker, why does the Premier keep plugging his ears and ignoring everyone telling him there are issues with this approach, and why has he chosen to dig in and drag this out until October?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Digging in — that's an interesting concept from the members opposite. We are waiting to hear back from them as to getting together.

The members opposite had a one-person committee for electoral reform in the past. I wonder what the Clerk would have thought of that. There have been practices right across Canada that didn't necessarily involve a Members' Services Board when it comes to these conditions. I guess those would also be out of order.

Again, we are willing to get this back on track. We are willing to reach out and work with the members opposite. We are encouraging them to come forth, and let's have that conversation — absolutely.

We definitely want to make sure that this process is happening. With the resignation of the appointed chair, we had to press pause for the independent commission while we work with the opposition parties to set a path forward.

Question re: Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services

Ms. Hanson: By now, the whole Yukon knows that the doors of Many Rivers are closed. The staff are gone, and the members of the board, who stepped up this spring to do the hard work of trying to revive this respected NGO, have resigned en masse. They resigned when they realized that this government had hung them out to dry, as set out in a letter to board members in which the deputy minister made it clear that the new board was responsible for the outstanding debts of the society.

I would remind the minister that it was this government that issued a cheque to Many Rivers in September 2018 when the society was already out of compliance according to the registrar. An annual meeting had not occurred and no financial reports or audits had been provided to the registrar. Any one of these was surely a red flag.

Mr. Speaker, why did this government release funds to Many Rivers when it was not in compliance with the *Societies Act*?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that Many Rivers, as the member opposite well knows, has been in existence in the Yukon for 50-some years. They have done exceptional work for Yukoners. They have gone into our Yukon communities and provided services where services weren't historically provided. So we, in our relationship with Many Rivers, looked at opportunities to try to bring them back into alignment and into compliance.

I would say that we had received serious concerns from the executive director at that time — the acting executive directors — on the financial management of Many Rivers. It did come from the organization, so we worked with them to bring them back into alignment and look at the service delivery model, ensuring that we provided them with the support that they needed at that time. We also have a legal obligation — well, we obviously have a fiduciary obligation to the taxpayers. When you give them money to deliver a service but then they're not delivering the services and misappropriating the funds, then Yukoners should be concerned. We were concerned and we took action. At that time, we worked with the then-committee as well as with my colleague from Community Services to try to bring them back into alignment.

Ms. Hanson: We raised this question because we are concerned. The community volunteers who formed the short-lived board of Many Rivers worked hard to provide overdue paperwork, hold an annual meeting, and file the financial information to assist this government with their financial investigation. They had an on-site financial investigator from Yukon government. They did this on their own time with their own resources, knowing full well that the findings could show poor financial oversight by the previous management and board. This government issued quarterly funding to Many Rivers in September 2018, presumably around a half-million dollars. After the month-long strike, closed offices, and no staffing, the society closed its doors.

The question is: Where did that money go? When will this government order a forensic audit of Many Rivers?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that we have done our due diligence. We have worked with the Many Rivers board. We have worked with their financial manager. We have worked with the organization as well as the department to ensure that the funds received were delivered for the services that they were required to render to Yukoners. Did that effectively happen? I would say that we have some serious concerns, much like the member opposite. Those concerns are of concern to Yukoners.

Simply put, we cannot let a non-profit organization that delivers services on our behalf expend our resources and not deliver the services. We have done our due diligence. We have worked with the departments of Justice and Community Services along with the board and their financial advisor to look at the context of their financial management systems. We are at this point still assessing that information, but we are no longer providing funding to Many Rivers. I am satisfied that the services that they were providing historically are being delivered through the Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon chapter. The member opposite may not like that answer, but we are going to ensure that services for taxpayers' funding is provided to Yukoners and we will ensure due diligence.

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Hanson: A financial investigation is very different from a forensic audit. In a letter to the board from the deputy minister, he indicated that there was an outstanding debt of over a half-million dollars and it would be up to the new board to somehow repay this amount. It's no wonder that they resigned.

We know the offices in Whitehorse and the communities were closed for months due to the strike and no counsellors or support staff were being paid. Rent on Many Rivers' buildings and offices in Whitehorse and the communities went unpaid.

The question would be: What happened to that \$500,000 cheque issued in September? Mr. Speaker, it's time that this government shouldered responsibility for their lack of action and oversight. When they ignored the non-compliance of the society and issued taxpayers' money, what did they expect? It's time for this government to be accountable and to proceed with a forensic audit covering the last two years of Many Rivers.

When, Mr. Speaker, will this government initiate a forensic audit of Many Rivers?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Seriously, this is an issue that this government — our department — takes very seriously. We do not —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. Frost: Exactly. Exactly, Mr. Speaker. We have a significant concern with how Many Rivers spent its resources, how it delivered — didn't deliver services to Yukoners, and so we have an obligation to ensure that Yukoners are provided the services that we pay for — taxpayers pay for — to ensure that Yukoners are given efficient services and service delivery models.

We want to ensure Yukoners live happy, healthy lives where they reside in Yukon, and if we have an organization that has received significant funding historically —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. Frost: — exactly — and has not provided services, of course we will take that under consideration and we will ensure that we do our due diligence and monitor and track accordingly. We have done that.

At this point, I am satisfied with where we are and we will ensure that we don't run into this situation again.

Question re: Queen's Printer Agency and Central Stores services

Mr. Kent: We have some further questions about the impacts of the Liberal decision to close the Queen's Printer and Central Stores.

We've established that the government only informed employees that their jobs would be affected minutes before the announcement went public. This of course is not an acceptable way to treat employees or show them respect. Yesterday in this House, the minister said — and I quote: "I cannot state that clearly enough, which is why, in dismantling an archaic and now virtually obsolete service to the government, we are making sure that those employees are looked after and respected."

Why does the minister believe it's respectful to refer to the service provided by 17 employees as "archaic" and "obsolete"?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am an old newspaper guy. I worked in an industry that is now transforming from paper-based systems to online systems. It's a change, Mr. Speaker. The world is now — the Queen's Printer has been around for 40 years, and we are now in an age that has changed from the way it was 40 years ago, with the phones and computers we have at our disposal. It's no longer a paper-based system. We are no longer printing documents the way we were 40 years ago — or at least this government is no longer doing that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to stress this afternoon that no jobs are being lost in this transition. People who are working for the Queen's Printer are going to be treated respectfully and fairly. We have employed — as soon as the decision was taken, we went to the union and informed them of the decision we had made and started working with our union partners in this transition. We consulted them about the employees and our approach. We worked with that union throughout the whole process. When, in consultation with the union, we decided to consult the employees and tell them what was going on, we did that. As soon as we had spoken to the employees and made our decision public, we then informed the rest of government about our approach. That is a wholly acceptable means of proceeding with this process.

Mr. Kent: As we established earlier this week, there are some contractors in the private sector who will be negatively impacted by this Liberal decision as well. There are local furniture manufacturers that have contracts to build and supply products such as desks, bookshelves, and tables. They don't have their own stores where these are available, so they build them, and Central Stores keeps them available for government offices.

As I mentioned, they had no idea these changes were coming in until I called them on Friday and let them know. Subsequently, they found out that they are finishing up current

work for the government and then their services are no longer required.

The Liberals often brag about the 69 public engagements since 2017 done through their online website. The decision to close down the Queen's Printer and Central Stores has far-reaching effects, not only for Yukon government staff, but also the private sector. So why didn't the minister include this cutting exercise in their public engagements?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about this issue again on the floor of this Legislative Assembly this afternoon. I think it's great. I think it's really important to start discussing what is going on here.

The Yukon Financial Advisory Panel's final report emphasized the importance of increasing the efficiency of government services to reduce costs and allow government to focus on providing services to citizens. Under the previous party, the Yukon government was spending \$1.50 for every new dollar it brought in — \$1.50 for every new dollar it brought in, Mr. Speaker. Yukoners understand that this is unsustainable.

The government will still be able to print sensitive materials, as needed, and we are managing the growth of budgets that were mismanaged under the Yukon Party government. What I'm hearing from the member opposite is they do not like opportunities for entrepreneurs, they do not like opportunities for small businesses, and they do not want our government to modernize.

An April 2018 news release put out by the Yukon Party said that government should be focused on creating opportunities for the private sector, not growing the size of government. So which way is it, Mr. Speaker? The opposition has no consistent values; they simply criticize us for any decision that we make, even if those decisions align with the previous statements. In March of this year, the Yukon Party criticized our government for tabling a deficit. They said, it's clear —

I'll continue this later on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kent: What we have established here today is that the minister is not respectful of the services provided by those 17 employees, referring to those services as archaic and obsolete. He didn't believe that this was an important enough issue to take out to public consultation where he could have potentially heard from those 17 employees on what could have been done to gain efficiencies and to save money, or from the private sector, which is affected.

As we have discussed a number of times, the Liberals have told all departments to find two-percent cuts. Yesterday, we pointed out that the Queen's Printer and Central Stores would not account for this two percent in Highways and Public Works, which the minister confirmed two days ago. The minister got upset when we asked him who is next in their search for two-percent cuts — probably not as upset as the many public servants who are wondering if they are next.

Can the minister confirm for us whether or not there have been discussions about other closures or reorganizations within his department?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with hypotheticals and fearmongering on the part of the Yukon Party. What I'm saying is that there are no people losing their jobs as a result of the decisions we're taking today. There are no job losses as a result of the decisions we are taking in the Queen's Printer Agency.

We respect our employees, we respect our union partners, and we respect the collective agreement, which is why we are working with those entities in this decision.

Again, what is clear this afternoon is that there is no consistency on the part of the Yukon Party. They criticize deficits, they want — government is too big, government is too small, government — there are deficits, there are not deficits. Mr. Speaker, in March of this year, the Yukon Party criticized our government for tabling a deficit. They said: "It's clear that the Premier's spending is out of control..." After this quote, their news release states that the number of people in government increased and that the Liberals are spending money growing government.

No consistency, Mr. Speaker — no support for small business, no support for change. This government is making decisions. We are modernizing the services that we provide, and we are doing it in a way that respects and supports our employees. No jobs will be lost as a result of this decision.

Question re: Health care review

Ms. McLeod: Yesterday we pointed out that 80 percent of the Liberals' health care panel skipped the consultation in Watson Lake. We also pointed out how the panel is estimated to cost up to \$2 million. The minister disputed that. She claimed that it is actually only going to cost \$650,000. Mr. Speaker, as reported by the media last November and again in the spring, the Third Party revealed documents showing that the true cost of the health care review is actually closer to \$2 million.

Can the minister tell us why she failed to mention this additional \$1.4 million in costs yesterday?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We are certainly taking into consideration the recommendations from the Financial Advisory Panel, and that is to ensure that we work with Yukoners, that we hear from Yukoners, and that we give the support that is required to the independent panel to do the assessments across the Yukon to ensure that we provide efficient, effective services and health care programming to Yukoners. We will continue to do that.

What we have done internally — we have provided the supports to the panel. We have provided multiple reports — historical reports, I might add — to the panel, so we are doing a lot of internal work to support the panel. They are travelling around the Yukon. The second phase of their engagement across the Yukon has taken effect now. They have gone to Watson Lake, as the member opposite noted, and she did state yesterday that we had one person. In fact, there were a number of individuals at the meeting supporting the panel, and the members of the panel are dispersed and will maximize their time in the Yukon and across the Yukon to ensure that they hear from every Yukoner.

With respect to how much that will cost, we have budgeted, as I stated, \$650,000 for that project.

Ms. McLeod: It is very odd that the Minister of Health and Social Services would tell Yukoners that the health review only costs \$650,000 when it is on public record in this House, in the media, and in leaked government documents that it is actually going to cost close to \$2 million. Either she forgot about the extra \$1.4 million, which raises serious questions, or she knew about it and under-inflated the number yesterday afternoon — and I am not sure which is worse.

On the topic of the review, we know that the Liberals were spending \$1.1 million on the tiger team. We have heard that the minister shut down her so-called "tiger team" that was assisting the health care review. So what happened to the work that the tiger team completed and the recommendations that they made?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The member opposite should well know, having been in the government for a number of years, that there is a process that we follow. We follow processes within this government, and when we have staff supporting a project — an initiative like this — the staff conduct their work as part of their day-to-day tasks and those are the things that are taken into consideration. The quote that the member opposite is suggesting as part of the overall budget is part of the in-kind contribution, or the staff time. So what we have actually budgeted, for the record, is \$650,000.

Ms. McLeod: As we have pointed out, the total cost to government as a result of the health care review was estimated to be close to \$2 million, as per the leaked government document from last year — \$1.5 million of that was estimated to be in-kind costs absorbed by the department. This would mean that the department would have to either seek an additional \$1.5 million for its budget or take that money and resources from somewhere else.

If indeed they sought additional money, can the minister point us to where in the budget documents we can find this additional \$1.5 million? If they reallocated money internally, can the minister tell us what program they took the money from?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am not sure where the member opposite is fabricating the numbers from, but I would say that we have —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Unparliamentary language

Speaker: The member will withdraw that most recent comment.

Withdrawal of remark

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw that.

The member opposite has misrepresented in terms of how much was spent. We have not spent \$1.5 million — we have spent \$650,000.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: For the Minister of Health and Social Services to contravene Standing Order 19(h) and then withdraw that word and use another word in contravention of Standing Order 19(h) is inappropriate, and in fact, I think, it makes a mockery of your previous ruling. I would encourage you to have her withdraw her remark and apologize for it.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: No, no, no. The term “misrepresent” has been used quite often in debate in the 34th Legislature as being the different characterization of facts, a different characterization of debate. Of course, we know — and the Member for Lake Laberge will know — that there have been a number of fairly lengthy readings of rulings from the Chair discussing the modifier that is contained in Standing Order 19(h) which requires that the mischaracterization — or however you wish to phrase it — the mischaracterization of debate having to be deliberate.

Although I recognize that sometimes legislators in this body are sometimes dancing on a pinhead with respect to the difference of words, the second word that the Minister of Health and Social Services chose has been used by almost all members in this Legislature to characterize different opinions with respect to debate and facts.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The member raised the tiger team. She raised that last Sitting as well and we presented and tabled the document. I want to just put that on record. Regurgitating and bringing that back is not something that I want to debate today.

But what I will talk about is that we have budgeted \$650,000 — the estimated staff time, the contribution of our department to ensure that the success of — the Financial Advisory Panel has recommended that the success of this independent review will be successful and we will ensure that it is independent and transparent.

Now, that didn't happen when we took — when I came into office and we had the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — then, the Salvation Army — a \$14.7-million project that was handed over with no programming supports. In effect, we had the Whistle Bend facility as well that was not supported — no O&M budget for that project either.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. I have had a note from the one of the members.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon we have a Mr. Steve Geick, President of the Yukon Employees' Union, and staff from Supply Services visiting us. I would like my colleagues to please join me in welcoming them to this House.

Applause

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS****MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS****Motion for the Production of Papers No. 3**

Clerk: Motion for the Production of Papers No. 3, standing in the name of Mr. Hassard.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of any evidence from the Government of Yukon that shutting down Central Stores and restructuring the Queen's Printer Agency will save money.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today — as you have just read the motion out, I think it's a pretty straightforward request. We know that the Liberals announced last week that they would be making significant cuts to the Queen's Printer Agency and Central Stores from the Supply Services branch. Anyone listening to the proceedings from this week will know that we have raised a number of questions regarding this issue.

There have been, in our opinion, some serious missteps from the government with respect to their conduct toward the employees affected by this decision. Mr. Speaker, this decision will impact 17 public servants and their families, yet we have heard from a number of staff that they were blindsided. In fact, some were apparently only told that their jobs were going to be affected just minutes before the global note went out publicly. Regardless of the decision to reorganize the department, there is something called “respect”, Mr. Speaker, and the Liberal government has shown a complete lack of it to these public servants affected by this decision. It's unfair and poor leadership to give them such short notice and be unable to answer their basic questions about their future.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to think that there was some kind of analysis done to support the minister's claims that this decision will save government \$1.6 million per year. In particular, we would like to see how it's possible, considering that he claims that there will be no job losses. How does government save money in this scenario? If all of the positions remain, presumably the costs associated with those positions remain. If the government is just going to outsource the work that those positions did previously, it sounds like we might actually be paying more.

Further, if Central Stores goes away, so does the bulk-buying of government to get better prices. I'm not sure if the minister has ever been to Costco, but if he has, he'll know that when you buy in bulk, you get a better deal. So that's why we are asking for the evidence to back up the minister's claim. He may very well be right, Mr. Speaker — but how would we know?

We know the Liberals like to talk a lot about evidence-based decision-making. But without the minister providing us with these documents or analyses, we are left wondering if this

is just another case of the Liberals' decision-based evidence-making.

So far, the government has refused to provide any evidence to back up their claim — zero transparency, Mr. Speaker. In 2018, the CBC revealed that the Liberal Cabinet sent a directive to all deputy ministers telling them to find two-percent cuts within their operation and maintenance budgets. At the time, the Liberals denied that they were looking for cuts, even though the Cabinet memo was crystal clear.

When the minister made his statement in the Legislature about this decision, we were hoping that he would be providing us with new information to explain this decision and the implementation of it. I believe that goes the same for the public servants, many of whom are with us here today — yet the minister has yet to provide any new information to explain the rationale for his decision. The general response in his statement and in Question Period was just re-reading his initial press release. We still have a number of unanswered questions that we hope will be answered through this motion for the production of papers.

Really, what we're looking for here is clear evidence that shows how there will be a savings for government and how the minister came to this conclusion.

The minister said that this is being done because they're looking for ways to improve service while getting the best value for money. The minister has said in the past that their Liberal government believes in open, transparent, and accountable government, especially when it comes to public money and that Yukoners deserve no less — yet he has so far refused to provide us any information or analysis.

The minister even quoted a dollar figure for how much this will save government. So, we would like to see the evidence of the analysis that went into arriving at this figure. We would like to see a record of all those who were consulted in arriving at this decision. If the analysis did take place, when did the minister review it and when was the final decision made?

Since personnel costs are a part of every government branch, we would like to see how this decision saves the government money if all of the positions are just being relocated to other departments within government. We would like to see what costs are involved in the transition process for the staff who are being reassigned.

The minister has said that the Queen's Printer would still exist for confidential documents such as the budget. So maybe he can be clear about who would be staying on to do that work. How many employees? Has the government determined which ones of those employees?

Mr. Speaker, we would like to see what the new proposed budget is for Queen's Printer and those who are staying on, because we are left wondering how many staff will remain to print these sensitive documents.

As we have all been made aware, the 17 affected staff — between Queen's Printer and Central Stores — were given approximately 10 minutes' notice before the global notice was sent to all public servants. So maybe the minister can explain to us and explain to the staff why they were given such little notice.

Again, if there is clear evidence that the government will be saving money, then there must have been a review, analysis, or recommendations to make this decision long before the staff and the public service were notified. We would like to see those records, that review, the analysis, and the recommendations.

Now, it is not just the staff who are going to be affected by the decision as well. We mentioned in Question Period that there are local furniture manufacturers who have contracts in place with Central Stores. We also know that a lot of goods are procured from local businesses and manufacturers through standing-offer agreements, many of which are handled through Central Stores. Now, these contractors didn't find out about the cuts to their contracts until after it was announced publicly. We would like to see how the costs for those contractors were taken into account in these supposed savings. Are there going to be costs involved with the breaking of contracts and standing-offer agreements before they are fulfilled?

Finally, what costs will be involved with the government's alternate plan — if there is one? Since the minister intends to contract out to the private sector, will there be public tenders going out, or does the government already have a plan in place for who is going to fill the gaps in the provision of supplies? If so, we would like to see what the proposed value of those contracts is, because — as the minister mentioned — no staff will be losing their jobs; they will just have different ones. That means their wages will not be cleared from the government's bottom line.

We know that the government employees will still need the same amount of office supplies. Now that the whole of government will be unable to order directly from Central Stores, what is the plan for ordering supplies?

What will that cost? Will departments be bulk-ordering from local supply stores? We don't know. Will public servants be given credit cards or accounts to pay for supplies as needed? Is every public servant now required to drive themselves to a supply store to purchase supplies? Will that impact administration costs for government with the increased volume of reimbursements for those people travelling? Was all of this included in the cost analysis?

What about rural Yukon? There are very limited options for department offices, schools, health centres, and grader stations with respect to local stores that stock the respective supplies. Will the government be requiring rural employees to drive to Whitehorse to stock up on those needed supplies? When a school in rural Yukon needs cleaning supplies, toilet paper, or printing done, what are they supposed to do? If a highway maintenance camp needs shop supplies, tools, or coveralls, what are they supposed to do? Was any of this taken into consideration?

Really, we just want to see how the government came to this conclusion that they would be saving money by eliminating these branches. How is this going to save the government money, Mr. Speaker? We are just asking the minister to show his work. That is why we brought this motion forward, and we hope that this government is willing and able to provide this evidence — because we can all benefit from a more open and transparent government, especially when it comes to public

money and, more importantly, people's lives. Yukoners deserve no less, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to debate this motion with the Leader of the Official Opposition this afternoon — very happy, Mr. Speaker. I also note, as I said earlier, that I have introduced several members of the affected branches here this afternoon, as well as the president of the Yukon Employees' Union and others. I am very glad they are here this afternoon — all of you.

As a minister, I must respect the separation between the executive branch and the administrative branch. I respect that separation. I also respect the union and the collective agreement.

With members of the union and the affected branches here this afternoon, I welcome the opportunity to speak about this restructuring. Change is difficult. It throws people's lives into tumult; it creates uncertainty — it absolutely does. We're talking about people, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about people with lives, families, homes, careers, and bills to pay. Careers — where a person works, what they do for daily living, what they do in their jobs — in most cases are critical to who we are and what we do. It's no small part of our lives.

I understand this. I understand this very well. In 2011, I lost my career. I lost my career with absolutely no warning. It was awful — it really was. It happened on a Friday in 2011, two weeks before Christmas. I had to go home and explain the whole situation to my family. So yes, I know what it's like to have your life, your career, and your family tossed into tumult, because it happened to me eight years ago.

That's why, when I'm dealing with employees of this government, I expect us to do so with empathy, respect, and compassion. I want the people working with us treated properly through a difficult transition. I don't want anybody to lose their jobs.

I know that there is still anxiety — and that's normal in these circumstances — but it's important that there are options for people so that they have a place to land and a rewarding career with good, supportive colleagues, a path forward in a relevant job that relieves some of that anxiety when change comes.

So as soon as this decision was taken by our Cabinet, we reached out to the union. We met with the union and we communicated with it through the process. We have respected the collective agreement — that is also very important to me.

We've respected the union and we have strived to respect the employees affected by this restructuring — this change in their working lives. We are not losing any people. There are no job losses as a result of this process. Nobody is going to be left behind, Mr. Speaker. This is important because people have experience, they have knowledge, and they have skills. They have worked very hard for this government — sometimes for decades — and they have decades of experience, decades of knowledge, decades of dedication to this institution.

This is no small thing, Mr. Speaker, and I understand that. We need people throughout this government. We're looking for — I'm the Minister responsible for the Public Service

Commission — I know that we're looking for people every day — good people. So we don't want to lose good people throughout this process. We want to integrate them into the government — keep them — keep that skill, that experience, that dedication to civil government and to the people of the territory.

The staff of Queen's Printer and Central Stores are dedicated employees who do a good job. The changes we are discussing here this afternoon are not a reflection in any way on the skills or the dedication or the commitment of the staff. They're not. That's not what this is about at all. It is a change in the direction of government. It's a change — structural change in the way government operates. Through that change, I've been very, very clear that I do not want anybody to lose their job through that process. So we have worked very hard to make sure that doesn't happen.

We will lose positions, not people. The Leader of the Official Opposition doesn't seem to understand this concept — in one branch of government, there are 10 positions with people working those positions — you move the people into other parts of the government where there are budgets, where there are vacant positions, and then at the end of that thing, you kept the person, but this position becomes vacant and the money that was allocated to that position goes and, in the end, you end up with a savings. You have fewer positions — fewer FTEs — which is a very HR term — but the people are retained. The experience is retained. The dedicated civil servants persist within our government because that's what's important — the people, Mr. Speaker.

The FTEs are just an accounting item on a spreadsheet to which dollars are allocated. In this case, we will lose some of those FTEs, but we're keeping the people — and that has been my direction throughout this process. We will lose positions — not people, Mr. Speaker. We are moving people to different units and this transition is difficult. I have no doubt it will be difficult, but we have done this with the union and we have informed the employees in a planned and proper fashion — with the union's knowledge.

That's the human dimension to this effort, and it is real. Believe you me, I empathize and sympathize with those employees affected through this. I know what it's like and I'm sorry this has happened to you through this, but believe you me, we want to make sure —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 17(11) — the member should be speaking directly to the Speaker as opposed to the gallery.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: When dealing with this matter for all members, what I have advised is that of course there is some compromise with respect to this but that the primary — the

primary — focus of a member's debate submissions are via the Speaker.

Obviously, members will pivot from time to time so that the members' collective gazes will not be on the Speaker 100 percent of the time. That's not particularly enforceable. I have been paying attention to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, and perhaps his submissions on debate for Motion No. 3 this afternoon could be directed a little bit more toward the Chair at this time.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I will certainly abide by your ruling. Thank you.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's the human dimension to this effort. The other is about government and business. It's a little bit harder, a little less human.

Here, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that we are getting mixed signals from the Yukon Party. One day, the Yukon Party says that government should be focused on creating opportunities for the private sector, not growing the size of government — not growing the size of government. Yet they don't support this decision, which is actually reducing the size of government with no job losses, with no loss of people — a loss of positions but no loss of people — yet they don't support this decision.

Another day, the Yukon Party said that it's clear the Premier's spending is out of control, yet they don't support this cost-savings. On another day, they criticize our government for not getting out of the business of doing business, yet that's exactly what we're doing here now.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask you: What exactly does our Official Opposition party want to see? What do you want to see, Mr. Speaker — one thing or the other? We are offering real solutions. We have identified to modernize how the government does business while opening up opportunity for the private sector, all while ensuring that no employees' jobs are lost, which is critical to us — it's critical to me.

The Yukon Financial Advisory Panel's final report emphasizes the importance of increasing the efficiency of government services to reduce costs and to allow government to focus on providing services to citizens. It did this, as I mentioned earlier today, because a previous government was spending \$1.50 for every dollar they collected, and that is not sustainable.

Yes, we looked at ways to get away from that unsustainable trajectory of spending. We know, in the past, we saw previous governments increasing their operation and maintenance budgets by 19 percent — almost a 20-percent growth in the annual cost of governing this territory. That was a high-water mark, but it wasn't the only — there were years in which we grew 10 percent and 12 percent.

Over a period of 10 years, it was absolutely staggering how much the government grew. Maybe there is some evidence to support that decision. I never saw it. That is what we inherited. The Financial Advisory Panel laid that out in stark terms — \$1.50 out, one dollar in. Something has to change.

We looked at how we are going to modernize. We looked at changing the way we deliver services in a way that was humane to our employees and yet manages to reduce some of

the costs of running the territory, taking into account the change in the way society now operates. Through this modernization of service delivery and the way we do business, the government will still be able to print sensitive materials as needed, and we're managing the growth of budgets that were wildly inflated under the previous governments. What I'm hearing from the members opposite is that they do not like opportunities for entrepreneurs. They do not like opportunities for small business. They do not want our government to modernize.

An April 2018 news release put out by the Yukon Party said that the government should be focused on creating opportunities for the private sector, not on growing the size of government. So I ask again: Which way is it? The opposition has no consistent values — they simply criticize any decision we make, even if those decisions align with their previous statements.

In March of this year, the Yukon Party criticized our government for tabling a deficit. They said, "It's clear that the Premier's spending is out of control..." After this quote, the news release states that the number of people increased in government and that the Liberals are spending money on growing government.

Now we are taking measures to trim FTEs in government while retaining the people we have — the talented individuals who work for the government — making sure that we protect and incorporate their skills in our government while reducing the cost of government in a way that is consistent in our approach of modernization and revitalization of government — moving it from — as I have said previously — a 19th century model of government based on paper and filing cabinets to one that is innovative, to one that is embracing information technology, that is embracing the Internet and online services.

I know this, Mr. Speaker; I have worked in the civil service — I have worked with the tools they have — and I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker: The tools that the civil service is dealing with are antique. We are dealing with some because of a lack of investment in these tools over decades. We are dealing — in some departments, we are using Office 2003. We are sending people over to the Public Service Commission to get trained and they can't even come back to work at their desk because the software on their desk is so old that they don't know how to use it. It doesn't mesh with their training. That is what we inherited, Mr. Speaker — such a lack of investment, a lack of change within the civil service — a lack of attention to the changes happening in society — that the tools our civil servants are forced to use are antique. They are not working anymore.

Some of these things are not even patchable. They are not even secure. We are taking steps to change that. I know the civil service is working very hard to change that and we are working very hard to increase the budget so that they have the money to make these changes. It is not cheap, but it is vital. It is very, very important.

As I have said, there is no consistency on the benches opposite. There is no vision. In April, the Yukon Party let out a news release that said: "Government statistics contradict claims by the Liberal Government that they are 'getting out of the business of doing business' and helping grow the private

sector.” Once again, the Yukon Party is full of criticism — the whim of the day. They seem to have no consistent principles. They pound the desk all year for us to reduce the size of government, and when we do modernize — when we do actually trim some FTEs while retaining the people, making sure the people who we have working for us — the skilled, professional civil servants — are protected and have a job to go to — well, they have nothing but criticism.

We are focused on modernizing and improving services while making smart decisions using evidence and analysis. Now, I have explained how we are going to save money through staffing. We have vacant positions, positions in the government, that our valued staff are going to move into, leaving vacant positions that we will then get rid of, resulting in a savings of — I believe the number is \$600,000 — to government. It is not insignificant.

A lot of the print work that is already being done by government is being done by the private sector. The Queen’s Printer has been tendering a lot of the print jobs with private operators inside the Yukon — inside Whitehorse and the territory — and that will continue.

The motion this afternoon talks about how we are going to produce documents. I am more than willing to produce documents. That is another thing that, as a former journalist, I am more than happy to do — provide information — so that people can see the decision-making process — how and why we are doing what we are doing. I think that this is the citizens’ government, and we — as civil servants and as politicians — are, I think, obligated to make as much information available to the citizens of this territory as we possibly can. This stands in stark contrast to the past practices. I know that because I was a journalist trying to get information from previous governments, and I know how difficult it was.

I am a civil servant who believes in the provision of government, and I am more than willing to provide the business cases that the members opposite are asking for this afternoon. I think that we are going to — we will certainly do that.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I am surprised by the approach taken by the Official Opposition this afternoon. I respect, though, their attempt to secure information. I think that is, as I said, a worthy cause and something that we’re happy to assent to.

Central Stores — he had mentioned staff credit cards — they’re already in existence — and a central repository for bulk buying. Of course, we want to make sure that we get the best value for dollar for public money in this government. Frankly, what we’re seeing is that there are new ways of delivering bulk services to government that are employed across the country. The way we’re doing it — with a warehouse that we have to pay for and all the rest of it — is really an anomaly in this country among most governments. There are more efficient ways of providing the material that this government needs to operate — the pens, the stationery, the toilet paper, the paper towels, and the cleaning supplies.

Rather than running a warehouse and the rest of it, we’re going to get out of that business and we’re going to start to

modernize that service too, and we’ll have more to say on that matter as it comes.

The members opposite would have preferred that we went out to the private sector and said, “Hey, this is what we’re going to do,” and actually betray the employees — have them hear it from — as we go out to seek the information — that’s not the way this was going to play out. It’s not the way any agency should operate.

Instead, we decided to deal with the employees and the union first and deal with business later. We continue to meet with the union, and we understand — if they have any further questions, of course we’re willing to meet with them and continue to meet with them on a regular basis.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to say that we have every intention of continuing to proceed with our modernization initiatives within this government. We are going to do so with respect and integrity. We’re going to make sure that our employees are looked after, because that is vital. We’re going to respect our collective agreements and the people who work for this government, and we’re going to make sure that we get the best service delivery for our citizens in the best way we can.

With that, I will agree to provide the information the members opposite are asking for, and with that, I’ll leave it to the rest of the House.

Ms. White: I will just start off by saying that, in 2011, I didn’t understand what an opposition Wednesday could be like. I’m saddened to say that there are maybe 20-plus people now who understand the pains of opposition Wednesdays. I mean, this is the reality of what they look like.

Today’s motion is asking that the government give the evidence of how they have come to the decision that they should cut down Queen’s Printer and Central Stores. Earlier today, I tabled a document that just talks about the average cost of one double-sided printed sheet. It’s actually interesting, because it’s from the Queen’s Printer. It’s interesting, especially with the topic of this conversation, because it’s costed. It has evidence on the paper.

It says the cost — if printed on your office copier — it says 11.4 cents. That’s the capital with O&M costs — so wage cost at 40 percent — so it says 11.4 cents. It says it’s 18.5 cents if it’s capital plus O&M costs of your wage — about 60 percent. But if you sent it to the Queen’s Printer, it would be a nine-cent copy. So look at that cost-savings.

It goes on to make sure that it fact-checks the calculation. So, in very small print — which is why I needed a bigger copy — it says that these cost estimates are derived by dividing total estimated costs by the total annual consumption of paper by Yukon government departments in a fiscal year. The time frame implicit in this is the assumption that the paper consumption figure reasonably accurately reflects the number of sheets printed in a year by convenience printer copiers. Paper that is discarded or unused would lead to a reduced volume of printed sheets and a proportionate increase in the per-sheet printing cost.

Mr. Speaker, you may ask why this is relevant. It's relevant because it's evidence. It's evidence on the cost of the printing. So what the Leader of the Official Opposition is asking for today is evidence.

We were told in the ministerial statement that this will save \$1.6 million a year and then he helped us with the math — he said that over 10 years, it would save \$16 million — \$16 million. We talked about it — \$16 million. Okay. Now we're asking how. We're asking for the document. We're asking for the paperwork. We're asking for the evidence.

So the Queen's Printer, on this poster — which I don't actually have the original of, but I'm sure it's beautiful — probably designed in-house by a person with skills — is costing out the cost of a printed copy. So that's evidence, Mr. Speaker. That's evidence.

It's interesting to note that the 2018-19 business plan for Queen's Printer was tabled in this House in April 2018. When you go through it — the 2018-19 business plan — in Appendix C, it talks about personnel and administration under QPA, and it says that personal administration is \$338,000 and other services by QP — it says personnel costs — \$649,000. It shows that it lines up with previous years and that there are not big changes there.

So the really fascinating thing is that the 2019-20 business plan wasn't tabled in this Assembly. It wasn't tabled in this Assembly. I need to apologize — and I'll apologize for myself especially — that we didn't catch it. We didn't catch the mistake — not the mistake of it not being tabled, but we didn't catch the information within the document because it wasn't tabled and because we didn't go looking for it.

The interesting thing is that you can't find it on the website. You can't find it on the government website. That didn't work. I can tell you that — if we're talking about antiquated systems, you could talk about me and my computer skills. I just recently learned that I can search in Google for government documents — and it's way more effective than the government website. As a matter of fact, it's the best way to find the forms on the government website. It's not through the government website; it's actually through Google. I just learned that, so you know — so maybe I'm one of the archaic systems that we're talking about.

I want to apologize again to the folks at Queen's Printer and Central Stores. I want to apologize because I didn't see the mistake. I didn't see it. I didn't understand until the press release came out talking about how there was just going to be this reorganization — that it was shutting down.

You know, when we went onto Google and we got the 2019-20 business plan — and this is where the change happens. Mr. Speaker, this is super relevant because, if it had been tabled, I like to think that I would have read it. It wasn't tabled and it was my mistake for not finding it. Again, I will take full responsibility. It was my mistake for not finding it because then maybe I would have known this was coming.

Under the expenses for the QPA and the personnel administration, we have \$338,000, and that's the same — the same number I just read you. But under the 2019-20 estimate is where it changes. It says, other services by Queen's Printer —

personnel costs, \$191,000 — \$191,000. That's it. That's the change that we've seen, with 17 people being told that their jobs no longer exist. It's there; it's in the business plan, and I didn't see it. I didn't see it.

So we had the minister talk about how awful it felt in 2011 when, on a Friday, he was told that his job didn't exist. Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, in the parliamentary system that we have — we're part of the Westminster parliamentary system. That relays a really clear order of responsibility — a super clear order of responsibility. In the Westminster system, there's something that we should talk about which is called "ministerial responsibility" — a fundamental constitutional principle in the British Westminster parliamentary system, according to which ministers are responsible to the parliament for the conduct of their ministry and government as a whole. The minister is responsible for this decision. The minister responsible for the Queen's Printer and Central Stores is responsible for this decision, as laid out under the Westminster system.

So, when the questions are being asked, they're being asked of the minister responsible — the top of the pyramid. Whether we like it or not, our system is kind of inverted. All the power comes down from a central point and then it spreads out. Under the minister, we have deputy ministers, then assistant deputy ministers and managers, and it goes all the way across government — but the ultimate person in charge of their department — the person responsible — is the minister. This is why this motion is so important. We are asking the minister for the evidence.

I can appreciate that the Premier is saying yes and is agreeing with me off-mic. I do appreciate that.

But when the minister has the ability to stand in this House and, instead of talking to the motion at hand, is slinging mud across the way at the Yukon Party for decisions of the past — here we are again almost three years to the day — November 7 was the election — since the last election, and we are still blaming the government of the past.

Whoever thought that the Yukon Party would be standing up for the public service? Certainly not me — but here we are. It is the Yukon Party holding a Liberal government to account, and we are talking about the evidence and how the decision was made.

When we talk about this motion and we talk about the fact that it was on a Wednesday and we talk about the fact that the people affected are in the gallery, I have to wonder why the minister took the stance that he took. Why blame? Why not just say, "The evidence exists and I will table it"? Why did we go through that whole process? To say that everything is going fine and that we respect the work that people do, we respect the people, and this is how it's going to work — I can tell you that when I saw Facebook on the day of that announcement — when I saw the comments of people who work within Queen's Printer or Central Stores on Facebook — how they felt — they weren't feeling respected; I can tell you that.

It is interesting because it might be acceptable human resource practice to let an entire department know that they are going to be reorganized just before you release a public

statement, but it doesn't make it right. It does not make it right. When you understand that there are some people who have worked together for multiple decades and they don't quite know how they are going to function when they get spread out — when they are separated — understanding that they know each other so well — whether they can take those things into account, like other people's strengths and weaknesses, and they can cover for that. It's more than just the dismantling of a department.

We can talk about how it is going to benefit business already, but you just have to look at the contract registry to understand that there are a huge number of contracts that are already directly awarded. Instead of going over \$25,300 — they are all directly awarded already for \$25,000. We have things like the Premier's letterhead. We have some other examples that we found — business cards — sorry, I messed up the notes, Mr. Speaker; I got carried away — but there were a lot of different things that have already been released. They already get printed out-of-shop.

But the one big issue that this has shown is that the way it was done wasn't right. Right? We want to talk about how much we respect the public service and the people who work within it — the public servants. Whether anyone likes it or not, there is an honest-to-goodness feeling right now out there that if this announcement can come, you know, like it did on a Thursday afternoon, I think, then what else is going to get reorganized? Then, if that is the case, who needs to be paying attention right now? If we don't think this has affected the public service, I think we are wrong. I think we are wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I apologize that I did not see the 2019-20 business plan — because I was surprised when that announcement came out. I was equally — well, not surprised when I was reading what people were writing on Facebook, but I felt for them, because what was coming out was true sorrow. I appreciate that the minister shared his own story of 2011 when he lost his job, but the difference is that the minister is the minister here and he is accountable for these decisions.

So, he can tell us in ministerial statements that he is going to save \$1.6 million a year — so, you know, if we do the math, in 10 years, it is going to be \$60 million. But so far, there is no evidence. We haven't seen it. We haven't been given the documents and we haven't been shown how it is going to work out. That is what this was about — it was about the analysis, the decision — how the decision was made. Because it's one thing to tell people that they don't have to worry and they are just going to get absorbed into other departments, but I can tell you from my own feelings about things that you do have pride of place. So whether or not you are being asked about if this is where you want to go or about if this is the new career you are going to be on is important. Having the ability to input that decision and how that works is important.

So the Legislative Assembly being told that everything is fine — well, it appears that it is not fine because there are people in the gallery who — like the Leader of the Official Opposition said — would probably rather be at work today doing the work that they care about, that they feel is valued and is valuable.

Mr. Speaker, it's fine and dandy that the Minister of Highways and Public Works tells us it's going to be a \$1.6-million savings in a year — \$16 million over 10 years — but what this motion does is calls on the evidence. You know, no matter what this motion says, it's never going to talk about how people feel, and it's never going to talk about the reality of the group of people who have been working together, who are looking toward a future where they're not working together — and maybe from the perspective of legislators, it would be easier to understand if we saw the evidence. Maybe then, it would be a bit more understandable. But as we stand here right now, it doesn't seem like it makes sense, because right now we're being told to trust — to wait and see.

So, what if the information that the minister says he's going to table, or make sure is available, takes three months to come? Or three years to come? Or three weeks? Or three days? Three days would be great — I would prefer three days, if I could put in the pitch.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that when we have a conversation like this — and the minister was really clear when he talked about people. It is — it's ultimately about people, it's about the public service, and it's about the public servants. We can't say that we value the public service and the public servants when, 10 minutes before a public release goes out, we tell the department that they're being disbanded.

It's fresh to continue to call the union into it, because it's not the union's responsibility to tell people that they're being reorganized. It's not their responsibility.

So, I look forward to the evidence. I look forward to trying to understand how this decision was made. More than anything, I just want to make sure that Queen's Printer and Central Stores know that it's terrible news. It is terrible news.

Mr. Cathers: I rise today in support of this motion introduced by the Leader of the Official Opposition. I would like to thank everyone who has joined us in the gallery here today, as well as anyone else who may be listening right now whose job is affected or whose family or friends have jobs that are affected by this decision.

I want to also thank everyone who is affected by it or who has family members affected by it who have reached out to me about this expressing their concerns and calling into question the statements made by this minister about cost-savings.

I can tell the minister that if he has any evidence that there will be cost-savings, that certainly has not been shown to staff or shared with staff. I know that those who have reached out to me — whether they be employees or family members of employees — are coming up with some very good questions and good points about how the system currently functions, which call into great question the minister's claim that there will be cost-savings at all.

If indeed no one is losing their jobs — as my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, noted and the Leader of the Third Party noted — and if indeed the jobs are not being threatened, it does call into question certainly those costs associated with payroll — whether there are any cost-savings

or where they are showing the cost-savings in an individual set of books.

The fact that the minister has stood up and told us of his own job loss and claimed empathy but isn't actually showing it in his actions is evident here today. The minister has the ability to press the pause button on the decision they made, actually sit down with the employees' union, and work through this. Show them any evidence that he may have of a cost-savings. Work with them, listen to their input, and determine what is the best course of action from that point in time.

This top-down, heavy-handed approach has left people in other areas wondering who is next. Is this going to be applied to other agencies, such as the Fleet Vehicle Agency or Property Management Agency, as some have speculated? That is one of the rumours that is out there right now on the street — people are concerned that those entities may be targeted or perhaps that other units in government — whether in Highways and Public Works, Health and Social Services, or a different department — may be at risk.

I do have to remind the government and the minister that though his statements — for someone who is not familiar with the situation at hand, the minister's statements about empathy and cutting costs may sound reasonable if they don't know the history and context of this issue. I would point out to him that the reason people have taken time from their day to sit here in the gallery is not so that they can applaud the minister for this decision. People are genuinely concerned about the impact on their lives and the impact on family members and friends.

The minister can use rhetoric such as characterizing current practices as antique and archaic, but not only are those terms offensive to the good work that is being done by staff and by the private sector in these areas, but the minister doesn't seem to understand the core business of the Queen's Printer or Supply Services.

The fact that, in their announcement, the minister said that the Queen's Printer would continue to handle sensitive matters such as the budget but failed to mention legislation is notable. The fact that, in his ministerial statement when he re-announced his press release, the minister still missed mentioning legislation is notable. The reason this is notable is that the minister does not appear to have been aware of the fact that the Yukon government is obligated by law to have the Queen's Printer print its legislation until I raised that with him in Question Period and he quickly did a follow-up and said, "Well, of course we'll follow any law that exists." The question is: Why didn't the minister know that before this decision was made?

The points that have been raised with me by a number of people again really question whether there is a savings. The minister has the opportunity to not just commit to showing us the numbers at some point in time, but if indeed this Liberal government that likes to talk about evidence-based decision-making had evidence of cost-savings, then the minister clearly had that information. If the minister didn't have any information about cost-savings, then it calls into question why the government made this decision in the first place.

The minister has also — on several occasions in this House — said that immediately after the decision was made, they contacted the union. Well, in fact, the minister has also previously indicated that the decision was made by the Liberal Cabinet in September and it wasn't until about a month later, in October, that the union was contacted about this. We've heard from staff who were told 10 minutes before the press release was made that their jobs would be affected. This is completely unnecessary — to take this approach, even if the government believes that this is the right decision. They had the opportunity to show staff the information, to work with them, to provide them with advance notice of possible changes, and then to get their input on it.

One of the things I have heard from people is that they feel that this plan has missed understanding some of the key details of how Central Stores and Queen's Printer actually operate. There is information that has been shared with me which suggests in fact that costs will increase as a result of this move.

There are also real questions about the capacity of the local private sector to step into some of these areas that are apparently being vacated by government, including — it has been reported to me that some of the printing shops are having trouble staffing positions they have right now, let alone taking on new work. I'm saying this with no intention of any of the companies that provide this taking offence, but we know that — in the times when we get the caucus newsletter printed, for example, it often takes weeks for us to get those printed by the private sector, due to how busy they are.

With government documents — such as the Blues, Hansard, legislation, and a number of other reports across departments, as well as consultation documents and so on — the government often has time sensitivities associated with that. So, Mr. Speaker, it is a question about whether it will actually meet the needs.

In the area such as Central Stores, I would just briefly share some of the questions that I have had shared with me. Those include: If the Queen's Printer Agency is going to exist to print sensitive documents, who is going to do this printing if the Queen's Printer is shut down and there are no printing staff? How many staff are not being affected — since at this point, people believe that their jobs are directly affected? In the area of Central Stores, what about supplies for the schools? What about exams for students — which I believe are printed by the Queen's Printer — janitorial supplies to clean continuing care homes or the schools, toilet paper for the schools, and toilet paper for Whitehorse Correctional Centre and other government departments? How many local vendors have the storage capacity to house all the supplies that 97 percent of Yukon government departments use? Who is going to be able to supply the Whitehorse Correctional Centre with the 20 to 30 cases of toilet paper that they order a month, on top of what the schools get? What is the carbon footprint?

I have had people advise me that they think costs will actually significantly increase by cutting out Central Stores, and the minister has not provided any evidence to the contrary. In fact, we have not seen any evidence, other than his statement about cost-savings, which he has failed to prove.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from private sector companies that are losing a large client. Again, we're hearing from employees who were affected that they are certainly not feeling very respected by this minister or this government, and they are questioning — as are we — whether or not this decision was actually based on evidence.

I would just briefly mention one piece of information that has been shared with me as well about cost comparisons for purchasing from a local private sector store under a standing-offer agreement versus purchasing from Central Stores. The information that has been shared with me suggests that, for some paper categories, there is an increase ranging between 13 percent to 36 percent — and the cost of getting that paper from the private sector company by the case versus Central Stores — in fact, with Staples providing this under the standing-offer agreement in comparison to Central Stores, there is an estimated cost increase of over \$49,000.

If the minister has numbers to the contrary, he is welcome to share them. Indeed, we welcome any information justifying their decision. But even if the government has the information to explain their claim of cost-savings, the way that they have approached this has been handled very poorly, it has been very disrespectful to staff, and they could have and should have worked with them and shown them any plans that they were proposing as well as given them an opportunity to provide input on those plans before government announced it from on high and gave employees just 10 minutes' notice, in some cases, of the effect that it would have on their lives.

The control is all in the minister's hand and in this Liberal government's hand. They can support this motion; they can provide any evidence that they have — and the minister also has the ability to hit the pause button on this decision and actually make a sincere effort to work with staff who are affected by this announcement and the union before finalizing it, including to get their input and determine whether in fact this is the right decision — because, based on the information that we have, it does not seem to be a cost-savings and it is having a negative effect on people's lives.

I again thank all the employees here today and those listening.

Mr. Kent: I am going to be brief in my remarks here this afternoon because much of what I wanted to say has been said by my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, as well as the Member for Lake Laberge and the Leader of the Third Party. They had a lot of the questions that I had for the minister in their remarks, so I won't repeat those.

Again, I think what I would really like to focus on — as far as gathering some of the evidence or the minister providing us with information on this — I think he mentioned the business case earlier in his remarks — but the communication around this has been awful. It has been terrible. As we mentioned, employees found out minutes before this went out onto global notes for all the public servants to see. The minister, during his remarks, referred to FTEs as numbers on a spreadsheet, but of course we know that these 17 employees and their families — many of whom have gathered here today — they are our

constituents, first and foremost. Every one of them up there is a constituent of one MLA who sits in this Legislature right now. Many of them, we would know from the Canada Games Centre or from gymnastics. I think I see one up there from our high school class — one gentleman up there who the Leader of the Official Opposition and I graduated high school with here, a number of years ago. I think that is the important thing to remember — that these aren't just numbers on a spreadsheet. These are people and it is their families.

As I mentioned earlier in Question Period today, when the minister said yesterday — and I will quote again: "I cannot state that clearly enough, which is why, in dismantling an archaic and now virtually obsolete service to the government, we are making sure that those employees are looked after and respected." As I mentioned in Question Period, we don't — and I'm sure that they don't — find that very respectful when the minister refers to the service that they provide as "archaic", and "now virtually obsolete".

I know there have been a number of arguments put forward here today that certainly suggest that the services that are provided by Queen's Printer and Central Stores are important, and they are vital to the proper functioning of our government and the proper functioning of us in this Legislative Assembly.

When we were in Question Period earlier today, as well — and again, this is with respect to the communications and how poorly it has been handled — I asked: Why wasn't this something that had been considered for engageyukon.ca? Those employees who work in those two branches of government — Queen's Printer and Central Stores — probably have a lot of great ideas with respect to cost-savings, with respect to efficiencies within the system.

But being provided 10 minutes' notice that your job is affected doesn't really — or doesn't; not "doesn't really" — give them the opportunity to provide any input to the government as to how they believe efficiencies can be earned or what some of the challenges will be with this decision that has been made. My colleague from Lake Laberge mentioned a number of them, as did the Leader of the Official Opposition: When you find yourself out in a grader station or in a rural school or office, what is there for you to be able to access as far as getting the supplies you need — the supplies that normally would be provided through Central Stores?

Again, I asked this today in Question Period, but I didn't get a response from the minister as to why something as important and that reaches not only through the public sector, but also the private sector, as I've mentioned — why wouldn't that earn enough — what are the thresholds for something to be on engageyukon.ca? Because certainly the decision that was made by the government to do this — as I mentioned — has far-reaching effects, not only in the public service, but also the private sector.

I think one question that I'm hoping that the minister can provide in the written evidence that he provides with respect to this motion — hopefully when we pass it — again, to put to rest some of the rumours that are out there about other closures or reorganizations within the Department of Highways and Public Works or within other departments. We have heard, again,

about the Fleet Vehicle Agency, Property Management — that some of those have been under consideration. We would give the minister a chance, when he presents those documents, to again confirm for us a question that I asked today as to whether or not there have been discussions, either internally or externally, about other closures. He has an opportunity to put it in writing for the House to see, but more importantly, for all the public servants who might be worried about a potential reorganization of their jobs and of their lives so that their fears can be put to rest as well.

Mr. Speaker, I think an interesting thing came out today — just in my news feed. It was in the *Yukon News* today that the Yukon Employees' Union was threatening legal action against the Yukon government for the restructuring of the Queen's Printer and Central Stores.

The president of the union is quoted here saying that he'll be talking to the legal department: "We're mobilizing the members and we're gonna put as much pressure on them as we can." He goes on to say: "I mean, this is turning into a big election issue for..." the minister. He goes on to say: "This is huge, a disgrace, and for a party that prided themselves on their platform about respecting public servants, this is a travesty. They're in no way respecting or doing anything for public servants to make people want to stay."

That news story is online at yukon-news.com for folks who are interested in reading further, as it goes on to explain the situation. I mean, those are very strong statements by the union president, and I hope that the government heeds them when they provide this information that we have asked for with respect to the decision that they have made.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will close my remarks, and hopefully we get to a positive vote on this so that we can get to the bottom of it. Hopefully the Liberals won't make this same mistake again as they move forward into the final year or two of their mandate.

Speaker: Is there any further debate?

If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Hassard: I would like to thank all of the other members of the Assembly who have spoken to this motion today. I also want to see this get to a vote, so I'm not going to spend a lot of time here debating some of the things we heard from the Minister of Highways and Public Works. I will pretty much leave that alone.

I do have a couple of questions for the minister. I think it's interesting that he is saying that he is going to provide this information. He made the announcement six days ago. This isn't a decision that was made at the drop of a hat. I would certainly hope that there was some consideration and thought gone into making this decision. So, I think it's very unfortunate that Yukoners aren't provided that information today. The minister has had time to get that information together to provide it, but I guess I'm not really surprised from this minister — which is unfortunate.

I do, in closing, have a couple of questions that I hope that the minister can provide an answer for us about at some point in time. He spoke of how there are new ways of delivering bulk goods. I certainly hope that we could get some expansion on what these new ways are, because that was kind of an interesting statement.

I think that most importantly to me is — the minister has spoken about the inefficiencies in Central Stores and Queen's Printer and how we need to be more efficient. It baffles me. If the minister really felt that way, why did he not go and speak to those people at Queen's Printer and Central Stores and say "Look, we have a problem here folks. Is there some way that we can rectify these problems? Is there something that we can do to make things more efficient so that you don't have to move jobs and you don't have to find new offices?" It just makes no sense to me, Mr. Speaker. But hopefully, some day, we will all get the answers to these questions.

Again, I appreciate everyone's time today. I appreciate the guests who we have in the gallery today. I look forward to a positive vote on the motion as well, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

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

Motion for the Production of Papers No. 3 agreed to

Motion No. 8

Clerk: Motion No. 8, standing in the name of Ms. Hanson.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre:

THAT a Select Committee on Electoral Reform be established;

THAT the membership of the committee be comprised of two members of the Yukon Liberal Party caucus, two members of the Yukon Party caucus and one member of the Yukon New Democratic Party caucus;

THAT the Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Leader of the Third Party name their respective caucus members to the committee by the 15th sitting day of the 2019 Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly;

THAT the committee conduct public hearings for the purpose of receiving the views and opinions of Yukon residents;

THAT the committee consider:

(1) the best system to replace the first-past-the-post voting system, including consideration of proportional representation;

(2) fixed election dates;

(3) legislative amendments in order that voters have the final say when a Member of the Legislative Assembly changes caucus affiliation after being elected; and

(4) banning corporate, union, and Outside contributions to Yukon political parties;

THAT the committee report its findings and recommendations during the 2020 Spring Sitting of the Legislative Assembly;

THAT the committee have the power to call for persons, papers and records; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the committee.

Ms. Hanson: I have a sense of déjà vu all over again having this conversation in this Legislative Assembly. You may recall that it was in November 2017 when we debated a motion with respect to following up on commitments made in both the Liberal government's election platform and the NDP platform with respect to electoral reform. That had been preceded by many, many years of attempts by the Yukon NDP and others to bring this matter forward and to actually get it addressed in a clear, objective, and non-partisan manner.

Mr. Speaker, it is true that, in their 2016 election platform, the Yukon Liberal Party committed to strike a non-partisan commission on electoral reform and to consult Yukoners on possible options for territorial electoral reform. As I said, on November 22, 2017, the Yukon NDP called for a motion tabled in May of that year. So, we waited. We knew that the government, like us, had made this commitment. We knew how strongly many Yukoners felt about this issue. So, we waited, first of all, because it wasn't set out as one of the many priorities we have heard this government use — either backbencher motions or ministerial statements — to talk about how they're moving forward on things. Nothing happened, so in May we put forward a motion and we said, "Let's debate this." We thought that if we put that out, it would maybe spur the government on to follow up and fulfill how they were going to

propose to members of this Assembly that we deal with this outstanding matter. Nothing happened, so we waited until November 2017, and then we called that motion for debate.

We urged the government to immediately carry out its election commitment and to establish what we called then a "non-partisan commission on electoral reform". During the debate on that motion, I highlighted for all of us here, again, that electoral reform in the Yukon had taken a long and circuitous route, going back nearly 20 years of discussions in this House and outside of it. It talked about the brief history of electoral reform in the Yukon put together by former MLA Jack Cable and the efforts of the former NDP leaders before my time to put this on the agenda and up until today.

It's ironic that one of the efforts by the former Leader of the NDP Todd Hardy — who used to sit in that chair — was that he put forward a motion that was unanimously agreed to in this Legislative Assembly to establish a select committee on electoral reform and many of the same matters that we put forward, and the previous Yukon Party Premier agreed to that and then didn't act on it. So, I am hoping that this is not the kind of response we will get from a Yukon Liberal government.

At the time when we had that debate in November 2017, I hoped that we as legislators could come together and work on this matter in a cooperative and consensus-based manner. It was a difficult day — a very difficult day. The motion was amended a number of times, with the final wording of the motion — amended because the Premier basically wanted it to reflect what was in their platform as opposed to what we were putting forward — and we agreed, finally.

You know, there are some times when you think that compromise is effective and it's a good way to go, but there are also challenges to compromise. The motion finally went forward:

"THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to fulfill its election commitment by appointing, in cooperation with all political parties in the Yukon Legislative Assembly, a non-partisan commission on electoral reform to engage and collaborate with Yukoners, consider fixed election dates and consider other changes to Yukon's electoral system."

That's what we settled on. Looking back at the debate, I'm beginning to feel that we should have been much more cautious and perhaps a bit more sceptical. I am never going to say cynical, Mr. Speaker. I think scepticism can be healthy. Perhaps we should have been more sceptical.

When the Premier said, during that debate in November 2017, that the background work on electoral reform was being done by the Executive Council Office, I did not take it to mean that the Premier, through the Executive Council Office, would control the process, but what we ended up getting was a commission on electoral reform that was essentially established by the Premier through the Executive Council Office.

The Premier set the timeline for the commission, its terms of reference, ultimately its membership, and arranged for its administrative assistants and determined its budget. The commission on electoral reform is in effect another branch of the Executive Council Office reporting to the Premier. There is

an Executive Council Secretariat that is charged with the responsibilities for that.

That the Premier thinks that this would be fair or acceptable is surprising considering the concerns he raised in the previous Legislature regarding the creation of the select committee on fracking. Now I'll ask members to cast their minds back to a time in Yukon not that many years ago when a previous government decided to begin consultation on oil and gas exploration in the Whitehorse Trough. Some might have said that might have been not necessarily the wisest place if you're not looking to attract a lot of attention to a subject matter, but they did.

As a result of so-called "public consultations", a number of questions started to bubble to the surface. People started asking questions: What are we talking about here? Fracking? We were talking about fracking in the Yukon? Fracking at Marsh Lake? Fracking around Whitehorse?

There was a lot of pressure starting to build in the community and a lot of questions were raised in this Legislative Assembly. The then-Leader of the Third Party and now Premier will recall that those discussions were not always easy. They were, at times, acrimonious. But, as a result of the pressure from the public and the pressure from the Yukon NDP Official Opposition — as a result of that and considerable debate both inside and outside of this House, the Yukon Legislative Assembly — the Yukon Legislative Assembly, not the Premier's office — finally passed a motion to establish a Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing.

Prior to the debate on the select committee motion, the government drafted the terms of the motion, and according to the now-Premier, this did not pass the fairness test. He said — and I quote: "... because the government has refused to engage the opposition parties in any meaningful way in the drafting of the terms of reference of this motion, I am leaning toward opposing it." He referred to the government's approach to creating this committee as a — and I quote: "... command-and-control mindset."

The Premier almost didn't support the creation of an all-party select committee on fracking because he didn't have enough input on the language of the motion. I am reading from the Hansard of this Assembly. So I would just like the Premier, Mr. Speaker, to imagine how he would have reacted if, instead of the creation of a select committee on fracking — a select committee that had representatives from all members of this Legislative Assembly, that had the powers to call expert witnesses, that had the powers to go out and have meetings in all communities throughout this territory, that held hearings in this Legislative Assembly with expert witnesses, that was supported by the Legislative Assembly Office — through the Clerk's Office — how would he have felt if, instead of the creation of that select committee on fracking, the then-Premier had created a commission on fracking that reported to him and that he selected and that he set the terms of reference for, and that he set the timeline for? Then, after he had done that, the Premier swung by his office a couple of times and then argued that those visits satisfied his commitment to cooperation? I'm

not sure that would work. I bet "command and control" wouldn't go far enough. But that's what the Premier is now asking us to support as an approach to what he rejected.

He is also asking us to support a process — his process — that is deeply flawed not only in its creation but its management.

A month ago, we received a letter from the Premier informing us that the chair of the Premier's electoral reform commission had stepped down without providing a reason why. The fact of the matter is the Premier sat on this information for a month without explanation as precious time ticked by.

I remind us all, Mr. Speaker, that we're almost in November — three years in the mandate of this government. This is supposed to be an election platform campaign promise — a commitment to Yukon citizens. It's beginning to feel like even more of a betrayal than the commitment made by the federal Liberal government which in fact actually did get out and did allow a parliamentary committee representing all parties to engage before they shut it down. We're not even allowing that. We're not being allowed that.

It later came out that — according to the media — at the time of the chair's resignation, the government had still not provided them with final terms of reference. Now, this is nearly a month and a half after it was established and almost two years after the Premier had said in the Legislative Assembly — quote Hansard, if you would like — and I can; I just referenced it — that the ECO was working on the terms of reference for this commission. So really, there's a significant disconnect here, Mr. Speaker.

So, it was within this context that we voiced our concerns with the Premier's approach to preserving his commission on electoral reform. These are concerns that fall on deaf ears.

We have been told that the very valid concerns that we were raising are merely partisan attempts to control the agenda and are without merit. So, when I, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, received — as did others — the August 2 letter from the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, we hoped that it would help reopen the discussion about electoral reform and the way it is being carried out in the Yukon.

I realize that I will be criticized for (a) releasing this letter and (b) raising the issues set out in that letter because it was addressed to a committee of this Legislative Assembly called the Members' Services Board. There are members from all three parties, including the Premier, on the Members' Services Board.

On August 2, when I read and then re-read that letter from the former Clerk, I wrote two e-mails on that very same day. In the first, I said that I think there are serious issues being raised here. When I re-read the letter, I sent another e-mail, and I wrote asking that the government push pause on the electoral reform commission until the elected members of the committee, representing all parties in this Assembly, could meet and discuss the issues raised. I also asked that the former Clerk be asked to attend a meeting to assist that committee to better understand the importance and implications of what was set out in the August 2 letter.

Mr. Speaker, I received a reply from the chair on August 23 that effectively said that the government is acting within its power, that it falls outside the mandate of that committee, and that he would not call a special meeting to discuss it. It was not our first instinct or intention to circulate this letter publicly, but we have tabled it in the Legislative Assembly so that the Yukon public can see it and so that it could and does form a part of today's debate on the next step in electoral reform in the Yukon.

We also tabled it so that the members of all parties knew in advance that we would be raising it in this debate and could think about the implication that its contents have for us all as individual MLAs and as the collective voice of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, as we engage in debate about how best to conduct a public process around electoral reform.

As a caucus, we have today received push-back from the government, which questioned whether we should have released the letter to the public, as it was sent to the Members' Services Board. To those questions or accusations, I say that democracy dies in darkness. Members opposite may want to ignore the legitimate concerns raised in this letter and instead attack the method of its dissemination. They are free to do so. But I would remind them that it is their duty to Yukon citizens and to this Legislative Assembly to hold government to account, and it should always come first.

So if members opposite find themselves attacking the messenger and not the message this afternoon, I would encourage them to take a good, long look in the mirror and ask themselves why they got into politics in the first place.

I have heard it today — and I probably anticipate that there will be more — the Premier has thrown — and may be able to continue to throw — partisan accusations at the opposition, but surely we thought the government would be receptive to concerns raised by the former Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, an individual recognized across Canada for his work and his integrity.

The former Clerk's letter echoes a number of concerns that the opposition has raised over the last several months. We admit that, perhaps due to his PhD in political science and his many years as Clerk of this Assembly, he articulated his views in a manner that more succinctly captures the serious nature of the matters before us. Perhaps we were not as articulate, but I want to be clear that the NDP caucus put our ideas forward over the last number of years based more on — shall I say — a lived as opposed to an academic understanding of the workings of the parliamentary system or the Westminster model.

But I have always said — I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that I said several times to the Premier in those conversations and in writing that we did not think that it was right to have the ECO, which reports to the Premier, lead this process. It is not and cannot be perceived to be independent. We did raise this and suggested the idea of either the Chief Electoral Officer or the Legislative Assembly, which had been used in the past.

Mr. Speaker, there are many issues raised in the Clerk's letter, and I'm not going to go through them all. But the two salient points are, in our view — first, the question of fairness. I just want to quote, if I may, from that letter — and I will quote

from that letter. It is dated August 2 — and it's on the public record, so Hansard has it — and I quote: "In 2019 Yukoners should be able to expect that processes used to determine the infrastructure of their electoral system (methods of voting, electoral district boundaries, campaign financing) are fair to all the political parties, candidates and voters..." — who — "... would take part in elections. In fact, one would hope that those establishing ways of reviewing the existing system or implementing changes to it would be scrupulous in avoiding processes that would invite doubts about its neutrality and non-partisanship.

"Fairness is key." The author went on to say that "... there are different views of what constitutes a fair voting system but everyone involved in the debate is looking to achieve fairness." That is the reason why we bring this forward today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the letter of August 2 goes on to say — and I'm quoting: "The government's electoral reform process fails the fairness test because only one political party — the Yukon Liberal Party — has had a hand in creating..." — what is called the Independent Commission on Electoral Reform process. The Liberals have "... established the timeline for the commission, its terms of reference, its membership, arranged for its administrative assistance and determined its budget. It has allocated opportunities to participate to the Yukon Party and the Yukon New Democratic Party as it sees fit."

It goes on to say: "The reason why fairness requires all-party participation is obvious, but I will state it anyway: Each political party has a vested interest in the outcome of elections. No one party should, therefore, be allowed to control the reform process or the outcome."

That is the issue of fairness. It is fundamental, and I hope that all of the members opposite have taken the opportunity, since we tabled this in advance of this debate, to read this letter. We have heard and I said that the Premier has said many times — particularly to the Official Opposition — and he was quoted in a July 17, 2019, *Yukon News* article referring to the Yukon Party: "They want to dictate and control the complete process and they're not in government, so they're not going to do that ..."

The letter of August 2 goes on to say — and I'm quoting from that letter: "The Premier's position, then, is that the Liberal Party's control of the process is legitimate because they are the government. This is mistaken."

He goes on to say: "During the 2016 general election campaign the Yukon Liberal Party committed, in its electoral platform, that should it form a government it would 'strike a non-partisan Commission on Electoral Reform to consult Yukoners on possible options for territorial electoral reform.'"

Mr. Speaker, the point is, as pointed out on August 2, that the conduct of elections is not a matter that falls within the authority of Cabinet. In a constitutional democracy, there are limits to the power of Cabinet. The conduct of elections falls outside of those limits.

"As stated above: No one party, even if it is the party of cabinet, should control the electoral reform process because it has a vested interest in the outcome of elections. This is true

regardless of the party in power.” It doesn’t matter who’s in power, and we have seen that. I gave the example at the outset.

“If the conduct of elections did fall under the authority of cabinet there would be a Department of Elections headed by a Deputy Minister of Elections who reported to a Minister responsible for Elections and who Serves at the pleasure of the Premier. That is not how the electoral process works in Yukon.”

The concerns raised in that August 2 letter also spoke about the issue of the process that has been established undermining the independence and the authority of the Legislative Assembly. I just want to talk a little bit about what that means, because I think it’s really important.

In the August 2 letter, it identifies that there are three ways that the process that has been established for this independent commission on electoral reform — three ways that it undermines the Legislative Assembly. I’m quoting here: “First, because the government by-passed the Assembly in creating the...” — Independent Commission on Electoral Reform — “... relying on a cabinet process whose authority has not been stated. Second...” — as I mentioned earlier, we had suggested that this should not be something that’s controlled by a government department reporting to the Premier. It is noted in the August 2 letter: “... the fact that the...” — Chief Electoral Officer — “... an officer of the Legislative Assembly, is not providing... support to the electoral reform commission.”

I think it’s really important, because when I talk to the Premier about why I thought, at that time, last spring, why the Chief Electoral Officer would be the logical office — because it’s outside the control of government and perceived to be independent as an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly — that sort of didn’t wash with those informal conversations.

The letter of August 2 more clearly articulates from a practice perspective what I perhaps didn’t clearly convey to the Premier in my attempt to try to reiterate why we thought it was so important to try to keep this at arm’s length — separate from any perception of political control or government control — like any one party controlling it.

I thought it was interesting. I will read into the record that in the letter of August 2, the author pointed out — and I’m quoting: “In the news release announcing the appointment of the ICER commissioners the government said, ‘The Commission will receive administrative and research support to carry out their mandate from the Electoral Reform Secretariat’” — as I mentioned earlier. It’s clear that the government has set up an electoral reform secretariat which is part of the Executive Council Office which reports to the Premier.

“The Secretariat comprises public servants who will receive their guidance and direction from the Commission.”

Mr. Speaker, the letter of August 2 goes on to say: “This is another decision that bears explanation. The CEO has extensive knowledge of electoral matters and extensive contacts across Canada.”

That becomes really important when you’re looking for independent expert advice for a commission that you’re asking

to make independent recommendations to change something so fundamental as our electoral process.

The letter goes on to say: “This knowledge extends not only to methods of voting (and other matters listed in the commission’s draft terms of reference) but also to understanding the logistical challenges (including the cost) of implementing certain reforms. This knowledge would be invaluable to the ICER since it is not apparent that any of the commissioners possess comparable knowledge of electoral processes.”

On that point, Mr. Speaker, I have to put on the record that when this conversation process was going on and we were getting all this information — we asked for information — so what are you doing? Eventually, we got a copy of the short list of people who were going to be appointed to this commission. The comment was made to me that we didn’t want anybody on this commission who had any preconceived ideas or who had even written about electoral reform. Okay, fine. If that’s the perception that is what independence means — that you’re not informed about an issue or you don’t have a view about an issue — that is probably up for debate and discussion, but it wasn’t of course with the appointment process that had been laid out.

But then you would hope that, since you are asking people who have no understanding of this process but somehow indicated they are interested in being on this commission, that you would provide them with somebody who does have that expertise. That’s one of the reasons why we would echo the idea that the Chief Electoral Officer — if we’re looking for subject matter expertise — would be useful.

The third reason that was identified in that August 2 letter is that the process, as it has been set up and as it seems to be stumbling forward, undermines the legislative authority — and I’m quoting: “... the electoral reform process infringes on the Legislative Assembly’s fundamental right to govern its own proceedings.”

I’m reading further on in the letter: “The draft terms of reference for the commission include the following in the commission’s mandate: ‘Investigate and assess options to improve how political parties and elected officials work... This work should include options for fair and transparent elections, political fundraising and... a more open and accountable legislature (emphasis added).’”

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that I asked the Premier at the time why that would be in the mandate of electoral reform when we have a committee of this Legislative Assembly that is supposed to do that. That’s what SCREP is all about. I was told, “No, that’s what we are putting in there. That’s our position.” I’m getting really used to “that’s our position” coming from the members opposite — which is unfortunate because that’s not what they campaigned on. They said, “Be Heard”. Well, “No, that’s our position. Listen to us. We’ll tell you.”

So, several months after — two or three months after those conversations with the Premier about — you know, really, it’s about electoral reform — the method of electing or selecting our people who will represent all of us in this Legislative Assembly into the future.

I was surprised but not — I'm actually pleasantly surprised to see that somebody who actually knows something about this from a longer term perspective than I do — with much more in-depth knowledge of the parliamentary system than I could possibly possess — went on to say about this fundamental point — and I'm quoting here: "The commission's mandate should not include any reference to the extent to which, and the manner in which, the Legislative Assembly is 'open and accountable.' The first reason is that the conduct of legislative proceedings is a separate topic from electoral reform. It would be possible to reform all the other matters mentioned in the draft terms of reference without changing the manner in which the House operates. Similarly, the House can change its procedures without affecting the conduct of elections. They are separate issues and should be dealt with separately."

He went on to say: "The second, and more fundamental, reason is that the Legislative Assembly enjoys exclusive cognizance (to borrow a Britishism) over the conduct of its proceedings. Neither the executive branch..." — like Cabinet — "... nor the judicial branch (or anyone else) has authority in this area." It is us. We're accountable for setting the rules. We established a committee to do so.

I am going to go on, Mr. Speaker, because this is so fundamental — and I am going to quote again: "The source of this exclusive cognizance is parliamentary privilege. The Yukon Legislative Assembly has inherited parliamentary privileges that originated with the English *Bill of Rights* of 1689 and were imported to Canada via the *Constitution Act, 1867*. These privileges exist so that the legislative branch of government can exercise independence from the executive branch..."

We are separate from Cabinet. That is why we have an opposition. We hold government to account. All members, not just the opposition, hold government to account, Mr. Speaker.

"These privileges exist so that the legislative branch of government can exercise independence from the executive branch, the judicial branch and others. This independence is necessary in order that the Legislative Assembly can fulfill its core constitutional role of holding the executive branch to account for the manner in which it governs the territory."

You know, Mr. Speaker — don't you think it's kind of ironic that yesterday we paid tribute to two of the remaining members of this Legislative Assembly who, 40 years ago, finally achieved a form of representative government — independence from having Ottawa dictate, through the Commissioner, what you could or couldn't talk about, what you could or could not legislate on? We celebrated that, and now we are suggesting that we want to go back to that form of internal governance. I don't think so. I hope that this Legislative Assembly is greater than that.

The letter goes on. The letter, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is very long. I'm not going to quote all of those pages. There are just a few more select pieces that I think are absolutely fundamental to having an understanding of why we feel so very strongly about the importance of having the process of determining what changes, if any, to the electoral process in the

Yukon are guided by this Legislative Assembly and not by the executive.

In quoting: "One of the fundamental privileges of a legislative body operating according to the Westminster parliamentary model is the exclusive right and authority to make rules for its own internal operations 'including day-to-day procedure in the House.'"

I'm going to just put this on the record — and he says it so much more eloquently. I have tried many times to talk about, you know, what we think about the importance of the role of SCREP — but here we go: "The Yukon Legislative Assembly's authority to make its own rules of procedure is also recognized in section 16 of the *Yukon Act* which says, 'The Legislative Assembly may make rules for its operations and procedures, except...' — there are a few exceptions.

"The Legislative Assembly creates rules of procedure..." — and those are the things we all know in this House, but there are other people who are forced or sometimes even want to listen to these proceedings — and those rules are called Standing Orders, which we can change — which may be amended from time to time. We do this — he said: "The Legislative Assembly appoints a Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges..." — which we fondly refer to in this House as SCREP — "... to study matters of procedure."

We have talked about this before many times — both in that committee called SCREP and in this House — that we do believe that SCREP could do more. Again, because — maybe we articulate it too much from, I don't know — not from a perspective of having studied these matters as long — but it was interesting to me, and I hadn't thought about it in this way.

Mr. Speaker, the letter goes on to say — and I quote: "In exercising the authority delegated to it by the Legislative Assembly..." — that Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Procedures — "... can solicit public input through a survey, written submissions or by calling witnesses to appear before it. SCREP may seek views regarding the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, including the degree to which, and the manner in which, these proceedings are open and accountable.

"Neither the Legislative Assembly nor SCREP asked the government to survey the public with regard to how the assembly functions. Neither the Legislative Assembly nor SCREP asked the cabinet to include matters of legislative procedure in the ICER's mandate. By doing so, cabinet..." — the executive branch — "... has created the impression that this is a matter that falls within its authority. It does not. This should be excluded from the ICER's terms of reference or mandate."

In sum, the former Clerk said that the Independent Commission on Electoral Reform process — and I quote: "... therefore undermines the Legislative Assembly because it: (1) by-passes the House because it was established by cabinet policy rather than by law, and (2) includes as a part of the ICER mandate a matter that falls under the exclusive cognizance of the Assembly without the consent of the Assembly..." — without our consent. That should be of concern to all members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, when that letter was written on August 2 — when we declined to engage further on the substance of the matters raised and when we saw this subsequent series of events with apparently no momentum behind whatever the commission was that was announced to be — it was going to be appointed or had been appointed — and with no apparent infrastructure to support it from the secretariat that had ostensibly been created — we thought, “Okay, we made a commitment.” We did so during the election campaign. We thought we did when we agreed in this Legislative Assembly a year later to follow through on creating what was called a “commission”.

You know, it has given us pause. One of the things that made us step back and say, all right — clearly there are significant problems with creating this commission if you think the commission has a mandate to make changes or suggest changes to the electoral process. It made us think back on initiatives that have worked — when Members of the Legislative Assembly could collectively come to an agreement that what we can do is, rather than us trying to direct it — whether it’s the Cabinet, the government members, or getting into a back-and-forth with opposition about, “Well, we’ll listen to you, but we’re not changing what our mandate is, because we’ve already decided what our mandate is. So just tell us that it’s okay.”

Without getting into that kind of a false kind of a discussion and a false argument which — as I’ve clearly outlined this afternoon — undermines the authority and the responsibility of each Member of this Legislative Assembly — and I’m speaking to every member in this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker — everyone who is elected. This is fundamental.

We have seen in the past — and I use the example of the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing. I can tell you that it was not easy. But what it did do is it forced government members, Official Opposition, and Third Party members to be there. They didn’t dictate who the witnesses were, they didn’t dictate what kind of evidence was presented, and they didn’t dictate the outcome. That committee had to come to a consensus and it was not easy.

But based on the overwhelming kind of database that they gathered over the several months that they were travelling about the territory listening to experts from all manner of background and expertise — and we’re not talking about the kind of extensive and time-consuming research that was required for something as controversial, shall we say, as hydraulic fracturing — but having the ability for citizens to feel that they were engaged, to sit in this Legislative Assembly, to sit in public meetings throughout this territory — what it did do was put a huge onus on whichever government would ultimately make a decision as to what should proceed next. It could not be perceived as being unilateral because that committee had together written a report based on what they heard during the process of the select hearing on hydraulic fracturing — risks and benefits — “fracking”, I call it.

What we have suggested here is that we step back. We are asking the government to step back. We acknowledge that, for

whatever reasons, this has not gone as the government would have hoped. Whatever caused the delays in getting going on this process — from November until June sometime, or July — there was some correspondence in April when we asked what was going on. Whatever the cause of the delay — that has passed. Let’s, all of us, say, “Okay, it didn’t work.” But we have an opportunity as members of this Legislative Assembly to say that we think the authority should lie here to guide this process — to be seen, all of us, as being open to hearing from Yukon citizens and to hearing from independent expertise and to not have any perception that the government has any controls over this.

I have identified some of the concerns that the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly set out in correspondence to members of this Legislative Assembly — and all members now are apprised of that. We believe that creating a select committee on electoral reform won’t address all of the concerns set out in that correspondence because there are other matters raised — and I think we will come back to those at another time. With respect to electoral reform and the commitment that was made numerous times throughout the course of the history of this Legislative Assembly — but was made in 2016 and was made again and reiterated by this Legislative Assembly in the successful passage of a motion that went through many amendments — faced with the fact that this was not able to occur and does not pass the fairness test. It doesn’t pass the test of respecting the legislative authority of this Assembly — of us, as duly elected members. We think that creating a select committee on electoral reform would pass the fairness test. All parties would be seen to have and would have input on the process, rather than just the government.

It would also have the benefit of putting the discussions and any review and information-gathering efforts on electoral reform in the public eye and on the public record so that we could avoid the perception, as the Premier said last November, that his Executive Council Office was doing the research and the work on this. That was on November 22, 2017.

Really? That might be nice for the member — for example, if there was a select committee — for the member of the Liberal governing party who is on that committee to bring forward — “I have done this research.” Although I kind of think it’s incumbent on us to do our research, quite frankly — but if you have the luxury of staff to do that, great. But there are independent experts as well, and we would expect that a committee would call upon those to put that in the public eye and on public record — because that’s the beauty of the hearings that were held on the risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing.

We also believe that it would eliminate concerns that we’ve heard in this Legislative Assembly and that we’ve expressed about the executive dictating the terms of reference that improperly infringes on the right of the Legislative Assembly to govern our own proceedings.

I’m aware that we’re not ad idem in terms of exactly what or how this motion, should be structured or some of the ideas that we have called for in debate. I hope, in continuing with this debate, that if members of the government or the Official

Opposition have concerns relating to any of the components that we put forward for this motion that we would invite — I would invite you: Put forward a constructive amendment. But I would ask that you keep the emphasis on “constructive” in the spirit and the intent with which this was put forward.

This motion was put forward to establish a select committee on electoral reform, to conduct public hearings for the purpose of receiving the views and opinions, and to prepare a report. Now, whether you agree with the four points enumerated — I’m open to it, but fundamentally it’s about electoral reform.

I fundamentally do believe though that any motion that is passed by this House today requires a commitment by us all to get it going — which is why we said in this motion that we are calling upon the Premier, the Leader of the Third Party, and the Leader of the Official Opposition to name their members who would sit on a select committee by October 30 so they can start work on Halloween.

If it’s going to take longer to do this work than the spring — I mean, if we are going to do it, we might as well do it right. What we are looking for is a sign of a commitment and a sign that members of this Legislative Assembly understand how fundamental to an effective democracy the discussion of our electoral process is. We have seen, around the world, challenges that people face in trying to achieve a fair electoral system. We have seen and we experienced in this country — and in this territory — electoral outcomes in this Legislative Assembly that do not reflect the wishes of the people in terms of their representation.

We have had many, many discussions — and some people in this room have been involved in initiatives over the years — myself included, and the member from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes and various community organizations like Fair Vote Canada — who have posited all sorts of ideas about how we might review this. I, an agnostic, Mr. Speaker — I want to see a change. I don’t know the technical details of which change may work the best, but I will say that the Premier is right. Unlike him, I don’t think that the current system is effective.

When he said last November that, quite frankly, he didn’t think that it was necessary to make changes — I bring this forward because I think — and from what I hear from citizens and from my experiences as a citizen — that we owe it to ourselves to try to make a change, to make our electoral system more reflective of our community, and a fundamental right — in terms of democracy and having an electoral system that works for all citizens in terms of the outcome.

So we put forward this idea with an open heart. We hope that there is some appetite for a meaningful debate, and we look forward to the outcome of this afternoon’s discussion.

Speaker’s statement

Speaker: There will obviously have to be a broader discussion about what Members of the Legislative Assembly wish to do as far as, arguably, discussing our various standing committees’ work in the Legislative Assembly — and perhaps it’s the wish of the — and I take the Member for Whitehorse Centre’s comments; I listened to her — and if that is the

ultimate wish of members — for that to occur with some frequency — I also take her point that we have the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. Committee meetings could be public, I suppose. Hansard could be present for that. But I’m obviously jumping the gun on that.

However, what I would say to the Member for Whitehorse Centre is that, on a few occasions — and I will review Hansard — you have come close to interjecting the Chair — the Speaker — into the debate, and that is obviously potentially problematic. In my capacity as a regular MLA, of course, I would participate or I would certainly love to participate in this debate, but that’s not my prerogative.

So, I will just put on the record — *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition— just as a reminder to all MLAs. I’m at page 323, chapter 7 — The Speaker and Other Presiding Officers of the House — Impartiality of the Chair: “When in the Chair, the Speaker embodies the power and authority of the office, strengthened by rule and precedent. He or she must at all times show, and be seen to show, the impartiality required to sustain the trust and goodwill of the House. The actions of the Speaker may not be criticized in debate or by any means except by way of a substantive motion.”

I think I’ll leave it at that. But obviously, if we’re going to start discussing the one standing committee, which is Members’ Services Board, where the Speaker is the Chair, that is potentially problematic.

Member for Whitehorse Centre, please.

Ms. Hanson: I don’t think there’s a Standing Order for this, nor do I think there’s probably a precedent either. So just as a point of clarification, I will say — in complete deference to that — I was attempting to be clear that, by not using — of course, I was referring to you, Mr. Speaker, in speaking. But I deliberately chose to use the word “Chair” so that it’s oblique in reference. That’s just to clarify.

Speaker: I understand, and like I said, maybe a lot of our committee work at some point has to be — could be reviewed. But that will have to be the wish of members as to how they wish to move forward — if at all.

Is there any further debate on Motion No. 8?

Mr. Gallina: I am happy to speak to this motion as brought forward by the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Voting is the cornerstone of democracy, and having informed conversations with Yukoners about their priorities and considerations when addressing reforms to our electoral system is not a responsibility that I take lightly.

Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to Yukoners during our campaign that we would strike a non-partisan commission on electoral reform to consult Yukoners on possible options for territorial electoral reform. My colleagues and I are committed to delivering on that promise that we made to Yukoners and we have begun this important conversation.

Currently, when Yukoners cast a vote, it works in a first-past-the-post system just like all other Canadian provinces and

territories. Some governments across the country are considering the merits of switching to another type of voting system and are engaging with their citizens to see if there is a desire to move away from our current system. This government is committed to ensuring that Yukoners are heard. As a first step in delivering on our commitment, a public engagement process on electoral reform was initiated. I would like to talk a bit about that process and some of the results.

The public engagement process ran from October 4 to December 14, 2018. There were 840 individual participants, two community organizations, and one Yukon First Nation government. The survey focused on what Yukoners thought was the most important topic for a commission on electoral reform to focus on.

In the survey results, 61.5 percent of respondents said that options to ensure that our electoral system captures the intentions of voters as well as possible was most important; 20.5 percent of respondents said options to improve how political parties and elected representatives operate was most important; 13.6 percent of respondents said options to improve how citizens make their voices heard was more important; and 4.5 percent of respondents said something else such as not having a commission or not pursuing electoral reform.

Electoral system reform was also a priority for Yukoners who provided feedback by e-mail or at meetings. In contrast to the survey results, the second most common priority for these Yukoners was about improving how citizens make their voices heard and, more specifically, improving the accessibility of the electoral system so that everyone who is eligible to vote has the ability and opportunity to do so.

Ultimately, this engagement process was about wanting to improve our democracy and obtaining feedback from Yukoners to ensure that we had heard them and were going in the right direction. Once this engagement process concluded, an independent commission on electoral reform was struck.

The commission was mandated to investigate and assess options related to the priorities for electoral reform identified by Yukoners and to prepare a final report with recommendations responding to these priorities and submit it to government by January 31, 2020.

Due to the independent and non-partisan nature of the commission, any member of the public — any member of the public — was welcome to submit their resume for consideration with the exception of paid employees of territorial political parties and Members of this Legislative Assembly and paid employees of the offices of Members of the Legislative Assembly. The selection process was guided by desired qualifications with best efforts made to reflect the cultural, regional, and other diversity of Yukon.

These desired qualifications included such things as experience or knowledge of the broader public policy context of democratic or electoral engagement, experience or knowledge of using research, public input, or other evidence to provide advice or make recommendations to decision-makers, experience with or knowledge of building networks or fostering relationships with Yukon communities, and other important

qualities including critical thinking and the ability to work as a team.

Ultimately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the board was comprised of the following three individuals: Chair Jessica Lott-Thompson and members Bev Buckway and Jean-Sébastien Blais. As folks here today are aware, recently it was announced that the chair has stepped down from the commission and the Premier has paused the electoral reform conversation with Yukoners so that all parties can work toward defining next steps in the process.

As you can see through the engagement process with Yukoners and establishing a non-partisan commission, this government is committed to delivering on the promise we made to Yukoners and is moving forward with this very important file, but our work has just begun. Since the time the chair of the commission resigned, the Hon. Premier has reached out to leaders of both opposition parties to set a date to meet and discuss the path forward in addressing electoral reform. Opposition members have been critical of this government in not collaborating with all parties toward a process that addresses electoral reform with Yukoners.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I note many attempts that have been made by the Premier to confirm a meeting date to discuss next steps, including reiterating that point multiple times here in this Legislative Assembly and by sending a letter to both party leaders, dated September 30 of this year, which I will read into the record so that Yukoners can see how the Premier has reached out. I quote this letter from the Premier to both the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party: “Dear Mr. Hassard and Ms. White” —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Speaker (Mr. Hutton): Mr. Cathers, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The Member for Porter Creek Centre just contravened the Standing Orders at least three times by referring to three Members of the Legislative Assembly by their names, which of course is contrary to the Standing Orders.

Deputy Speaker's ruling

Deputy Speaker: I would ask the member to refer to the members by their riding. Thank you.

Mr. Gallina: Thank you for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I apologize. I will not refer to members by their name, but by their riding — for their riding, not from their riding, as the Speaker likes to point out to us.

To quote the letter from the Premier to the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party: “I am writing to you about the current Independent Commission on Electoral Reform.

“As you may be aware, the Chair of the Commission, Jessica Lott Thompson, has resigned from the position.

“This development was unexpected, and it has led our government to give further consideration on how an

independent, non-partisan commission could operate with support from all parties in the Legislative Assembly.

“I want to set up a formal meeting with both of you to explore how a commission could be established and carry out its work in a more productive atmosphere that respects the fact that all elected members have a keen interest in its work.

“I would appreciate hearing from you about your interest in this meeting. Our respective offices can then work on making arrangements for it to proceed at a mutually convenient time.”

As well, today I tabled a motion that this House urges the leaders of the opposition parties to confirm a date for when they would like to meet with the Premier to discuss electoral reform.

I heard today the Member for Whitehorse Centre state — from Hansard — that the Premier, when he was in the Third Party, talked about the importance of collaboration with opposition members. And I hear today that the Premier wants to collaborate with all members to move this conversation forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I understand it, the Leader of the Third Party has expressed a desire to meet, and I thank her for her willingness to move forward. However, the Leader of the Official Opposition has not confirmed when he would like to meet with the Premier to discuss the important matter of electoral reform and the type of conversation that he thinks should be had with Yukoners. It would seem to me and many other Yukoners that the Leader of the Official Opposition does not want to work with all parties toward defining next steps.

I have confidence in the progress that this government is making to have collaborative discussions with opposition members, and I will leave it to the Leader of the Official Opposition to tell Yukoners why he has chosen not to meet on this.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre has passionately referenced a comprehensive letter that she tabled yesterday from the former Clerk of this Legislative Assembly. I have had an opportunity to review that letter and there are many good points for consideration. A reflection that I have from this letter from the former Clerk, as it is being discussed today, is that the Premier has pushed pause on an Independent Commission on Electoral Reform and is looking to meet with opposition members to discuss the best options for moving forward.

I suspect that, if members wanted to consider any of the options made by the former Clerk, that they could do that at a meeting or even multiple meetings with the Premier in collaborating on the process and discussing electoral reform with Yukoners.

Another point that I would like to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that, when I hear the Member for Whitehorse Centre reference at length the points that were made in the letter that she tabled from the former Clerk, there are many options to consider. As she referenced this letter and the motion before us today, she said that there were many points in this letter, but we have only included some of them in this motion today, and others we will come back to at another time.

How has the Member for Whitehorse Centre determined that some of the points made by the Clerk were worthy and others weren't? This gives me cause to believe that the motion

before us is quite prescriptive. It is comprehensive, but I feel like we are moving forward on debate with a motion today before all parties have sat down to collaborate and discuss next steps.

As I look at the motion before us today, the Member for Whitehorse Centre does raise good points in her motion. This motion is very comprehensive and quite prescriptive — very prescriptive, in fact. It is the desire of this government, and the Premier specifically, to meet with opposition members to discuss ways in which we could move forward collectively and have the important conversation about electoral reform with Yukoners.

In summary, this government has engaged with Yukoners on the important conversation of electoral reform and considered options to ensure that our electoral system captures the intentions of voters, options to improve how political parties and elected representatives work, and options to improve how citizens make their voice heard.

We have made a commitment to strike a non-partisan commission on electoral reform to consult Yukoners on possible options for territorial electoral reform. The process for that independent commission was established and has been paused, as the chair has resigned. The Premier has reached out to opposition members — by many points made in this Legislative Assembly — requesting time to meet with opposition leaders to discuss next steps collaboratively. The Premier has sent letters to the leaders of the opposition.

We have heard at length a letter from the Clerk with options for this government to consider when addressing electoral reform here in the territory. As I made note, the Member for Whitehorse Centre has chosen some of those options for consideration today in our motion and has put aside other options for further consideration.

Finally, today we are debating a very specific and prescribed motion that comes before all parties have discussed the next steps in the overall plan in addressing electoral reform here in Yukon.

I find this motion premature and I think — I believe and I think Yukoners understand — that if there is a desire by all parties to collaborate to set out a plan for how the discussion and conversation is going to take place with Yukoners, that should happen first, before we agree to very prescribed, specific commitments in the motion that has been put forth here today.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to this — as our caucus is a critic for democratic institutions, I would like to note — for anyone who has not been following this issue or is not familiar with what has gone on between the parties and the caucuses — that some of the statements made by the Liberal member who spoke might seem believable. However, in fact, the Premier has not been straight in his dealings with the Official Opposition or the Third Party.

The Premier met with the Leader of the Official Opposition and the chief of staff of the Official Opposition when first proposing this electoral reform process, and then the Premier had a differing version of events from that meeting from what

actually occurred. We felt that it reinforced our initial view that these types of things are better to have in a written record.

We have been quite clear from the start that the Official Opposition — while electoral reform was not part of our platform and is not a priority that we had campaigned on — we are open to asking Yukoners about their views on electoral reform. For us, the fundamental element of it is that it has to be an all-party process — whether that is through select committee, as proposed by the NDP, which would be formed of MLAs, or whether that commission is formed of citizens with all political parties, not just the one in government — having equal involvement in setting the terms of reference and determining who would sit on the committees. Those are approaches that we have said repeatedly are acceptable to us.

We have also given the example of the Electoral District Boundaries Commission as a model that would be an acceptable one. Certainly the Liberal government could have, at the outset, followed that model which has been in place for decades under Yukon law whereby — for those who are not familiar with it — each political party gets to choose their representative on the Electoral District Boundaries Commission, and the Chief Electoral Officer and a Justice of the Supreme Court of the Yukon round out that commission. They are of course supposed to be independent in that.

That process could have been used. A similar model could have been adopted. The proposals as noted by the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Dr. Floyd McCormick — I very much appreciate his detailed letter which is in fact — if someone reads through it — a damning indictment of how the Yukon Liberal government has handled electoral reform.

I would remind members that Dr. McCormick, who served the Legislative Assembly as Clerk and Deputy Clerk for many years, is an expert on that area and is now a retired private citizen. Those who know him know that he does not weigh in lightly on such matters. Certainly, I am pleased that the public now has his letter to read so that they can in fact see that the letter from Dr. McCormick does in fact in many areas reinforce what we have been saying as the Yukon Party Official Opposition for months and months on this process. That includes the fact that it should not just be up to the governing party to set the terms of reference and to choose the members.

I would note as well, for anyone who is listening right now or reads this, that in fact there's an article tonight in the *Whitehorse Star* — an interview with Dr. Floyd McCormick — that does a good job of outlining some of his concerns as well as the comments made by myself and by the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

I would just briefly quote from that — noting that as in the letter — his letter says that the commission process is — quote: "... fundamentally unfair."

I would note that the former Clerk served the Legislative Assembly for 18 years and he has a doctorate in political science. He is certainly an expert on these matters. He noted that it's unfairly heavy-handed in a ruling party's favour — and I'm quoting from the letter again: "The government's electoral reform process fails the fairness test because only one political

party — the Yukon Liberal Party — has a hand in creating the... process."

Another quote is: "Each political party has a vested interest in the outcome of elections. No one party should, therefore, be allowed to control the reform process or the outcome."

I would note as well that he goes on to specifically say that the Premier is wrong when the Premier stated in an interview this summer — when he criticized our comments about this process. A quotation from the letter is: "The Premier's position, then, is that the Liberal Party's control of the process is legitimate because they are the government. This is mistaken."

Another quote is: "The upshot is that forming a government does not, in and of itself, give the Yukon Liberal Party, the authority to unilaterally implement an electoral reform process."

I am not going to go on at great length in reading excerpts from the letter. The mover of the motion used her time to read a number of those excerpts, and I agree that she has highlighted most of the key excerpts from that letter for the record, but we do feel that a servant of the Yukon Legislative Assembly for some 18 years who is a recognized expert in these matters — that his letter and his very serious concerns outlined in it should not be casually dismissed by the government, as both the Premier and the Member for Porter Creek Centre did in their remarks.

Backing up to the beginning of the Liberals' survey about electoral reform that was mentioned by the Liberal backbencher — the survey, of course, was also crafted only by the government. It included biased and leading questions, and it didn't even ask Yukoners the key question: Do you want change to occur, or do you prefer the current system?

It is also modelled so that, as we pointed out with all of the Liberals' new surveys, people can fill them out multiple times, and some people do. When they are using the survey results and statistics from it to allegedly make decisions, it is effectively like a referendum where you can vote any number of times and just keep stuffing the ballot box with whatever your opinion is on an issue.

The fact that the Premier has been so reluctant to put anything in writing is concerning.

I am going to, just for the record, provide copies of two letters that were sent from the Leader of the Official Opposition to the Premier regarding electoral reform. I would just point out that we have already made some public regarding this, and these are simply the most recent two in a series of letters that have been sent by the Leader of the Official Opposition.

On October 9, the Leader of the Official Opposition wrote to the Premier thanking him for his letter and indicating: "I would like to note that on July 15, 2019 I wrote you a letter outlining our position on electoral reform and reiterating a number of questions surrounding the process you designed to stack the deck in favour of the Liberal Party. I still have not received a response to this letter."

From the letter dated October 17, the Leader of the Official Opposition in that notes: "In your response of October 15th you have still not answered my questions. We have now sent you

several letters with these questions and you have refused to answer them. I have appended these letters for your reference.”

I will just table those letters for the public record, Mr. Speaker.

With the suggestion by the Member for Porter Creek Centre that, oh, the Premier has been — he would claim — very proactive in reaching out, it certainly glosses over that big glaring fact that, after being burned by the Premier following a previous meeting, we said that we want a written record of exchanges between the parties on this. We have provided multiple comments and questions in writing that may have been ignored. We have also been very clear about our views on what an appropriate structure would be and that, if government were to revoke the remaining appointments to the commission and go back to the drawing board and work with us and the Third Party on attempting to actually reach agreement on a path forward, including terms of reference, we would be open to doing that.

I have to point to the fact that the letter from the former Clerk, who served this Legislative Assembly for almost two decades, is a damning indictment of the Yukon Liberal government’s approach to electoral reform.

In wrapping up my comments, I would also note that the Premier knows full well that I have been very clear, as a member on the Members’ Services Board, about our views on this. I’m going to respect the confidentiality of that process by not getting into specific details or talking about specific comments I made or correspondence that was sent, but the Premier knows that we have been very clear about our views on this topic in all venues and in all meetings.

As I noted, the approach outlined by the Member for Whitehorse Centre is one that we are generally able to agree on. It is not the only model that we would consider acceptable, but in the interest of trying to find common ground and take an idea from them and work with it in a way that we believe is acceptable, we are prepared to propose an amendment to it. That includes the fact that, for us, it should not be a foregone conclusion that the first-past-the-post voting system will be replaced with another model. We believe that it is fundamentally important to provide options, talk about other potential models — the pros and cons of those models — and to allow Yukoners then to provide their input, based on considering both the strengths and weaknesses of the current model and the strengths and weaknesses of alternate models. Ultimately, it should be up to Yukoners to make a decision. While we will not include it in the amendment here today, as I know the NDP has not been supportive of a referendum, I want to reiterate that it remains our position that, if changes are recommended, it is fundamental that Yukoners have the final say in a binding referendum on that topic.

Amendment proposed

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT Motion No. 8 be amended by:

(1) deleting the phrase “the best system to replace the first-past-the-post voting system, including consideration of proportional representation;” and inserting in its place the

phrase “whether Yukoners want to replace the first-past-the-post voting system with proportional representation or another model”;

(2) deleting the phrase “; and (4) banning” and inserting in its place the phrase “(4) whether to limit or ban”; and

(3) inserting after item 4 the phrase “and (5) how to ensure that rural Yukoners do not have less of a voice or representation following any changes to the electoral system”.

I have copies of that amendment that I will table and I would just note that, in the copies — I just realized, Mr. Speaker, that the original — I have corrected it. There is a typographical error in the copies where some of them repeat the words “do not”. The original motion in fact says “do not” only once in that clause.

Speaker: We have a proposed amendment to Motion No. 8.

The amendment is procedurally in order.

It is moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Motion No. 8 be amended by:

(1) deleting the phrase “the best system to replace the first-past-the-post voting system, including consideration of proportional representation;” and inserting in its place the phrase “whether Yukoners want to replace the first-past-the-post voting system with proportional representation or another model”;

(2) deleting the phrase “; and (4) banning” and inserting in its place the phrase “(4) whether to limit or ban”; and

(3) inserting after item 4 the phrase “and (5) how to ensure that rural Yukoners do not have less of a voice or representation following any changes to the electoral system”.

Member for Lake Laberge, on the proposed amendment, you have six minutes and 33 seconds.

Mr. Cathers: I would just like to note in speaking to this that, in terms of the committee structure, it has been our preference for equal representation from all parties. That is not precisely what was proposed by the Third Party. We also recognize that, in the proposal and the motion that this amendment seeks to amend, the Member for Whitehorse Centre had tabled it with two members of the Liberal caucus, two members of the Yukon Party caucus, and one member of the NDP caucus. Since that is their proposal and since we also recognize that, as a two-party caucus, there are lots of demands on their time, I would just note that we considered including a change in the amendment to have it as two representatives of all parties but decided that, since it was the proposal made by the Third Party to give themselves only one seat, we would accept that proposal in the interest of collaboration — guessing that it was probably in part due to the challenges that a two-member caucus has with being at every committee meeting. So, I just want to note that lest someone question why the exact wording of how the motion would read — if this amendment passes — is slightly different from what we’ve indicated our preferences are on this. It’s in the interest of working together and accepting the proposal made by the NDP in this case.

Speaking just very specifically to the amendment itself, I want to note that the reason that we have included the proposal — how to ensure that rural Yukoners do not have less of a voice or representation following any changes to the electoral system — is because, with a proportional representation model — such as mixed-member proportional, which is often talked about by those proposing electoral reform — the net effect of such a model — unless it was significantly increasing the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly — which the government, in voting against the Electoral District Boundaries Commission report on their own legislation suggested that they're opposed to — what it would lead to then is the potential that, in a proportional representation system or a mixed-member proportional system, there could be more power potentially for Whitehorse — with the greatest share of the population — and less representation for rural Yukon. Some proposals which have been talked about by political parties or reporters writing opinion pieces in the past have talked about having less rural ridings and making them larger, and that of course would reduce the representation for rural Yukon.

Recognizing my time to speak to this is fairly short, I'm not going to elaborate on that at great length at this point — just noting that we believe it's very important as a specific consideration in the mandate of the committee that they consider how to ensure that rural Yukoners do not have less of a voice of representation following any changes to the electoral system. We believe that absolutely has to be one of the guiding principles for a select committee on this topic.

The other parts of the amendment that I'm proposing on behalf of our caucus include what the NDP has proposed — banning corporate and union contributions. We believe that it would be more appropriate for the committee to consider whether to limit or ban corporate and union contributions and outside donations and hear from Yukoners on that topic.

As well, the NDP's original motion did seem to us to be assuming that the first-past-the-post voting system should be replaced. We understand and respect that this is their position. That is not our position. So in attempting to propose wording that we hope would be acceptable to the NDP — and the government as well — we are proposing changing that to ask the question of whether Yukoners want to replace the first-past-the-post voting system with proportional representation or another model.

As I have said, it is our view that, if electoral reform is being considered, people should have the opportunity to see the various options being talked about, talk about the strengths and weaknesses of all those options, talk about how that compares to the current system, and that, ultimately following that, if we are not convinced as the Official Opposition that Yukoners ultimately will want to change, especially recognizing that in other jurisdictions that have proposed and considered it — and even had referendums on the topic — electoral reform has not gone forward to replace first-past-the-post as a voting system in Canada.

Whether or not anyone agrees with the public in that decision, we believe that it is fundamentally important that, if change is proposed, it not just be a handful of people deciding

to proceed with it and that ultimately any proposal for changing the system significantly must go to Yukoners in a binding referendum on that topic. But I would note that I did not include that in the amendment, recognizing that this wording might be problematic for the NDP's position. So we have attempted to work with what they have proposed and come forward with an alternate proposal that we hoped would be acceptable.

In concluding my remarks, I would note that, just as we are doing here with the motion proposed by the NDP, in the past when governments have actually attempted to reach consensus on the *Elections Act*, it has been possible. When we made changes in 2015, not only did those changes have all-party involvement and all parties saw the text before the legislation was tabled, but in fact, Mr. Speaker, the leaders of the Liberal Party and the NDP were quoted in the press release from the government supporting it, and all Members of the Legislative Assembly unanimously approved those significant changes.

Ms. Hanson: I will just be very brief here, mindful of the time. I do hope that we get to a vote on this today on the broader motion.

I would agree with the Member for Lake Laberge that generally the proposed amendments are in line with what we were attempting to do, which was really to see a select committee that would conduct public hearings for the purpose of receiving the views and opinions of Yukon residents.

Yes, it's a moot point — whether it's whether or not to replace it — but to have that conversation about electoral reform. I appreciate that — where the desire to include the admonition or caution about limiting — ensuring that the voice of rural Yukoners is reflected in this discussion. I would hope that any select committee would do it, as they did when they did the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing.

One of the driving forces on that reflection is seeing the failure of the government to actually respect the Electoral District Boundaries Commission's report and the bill that they brought forward reflecting the recommendations of a non-partisan, arm's-length committee that was attempting to address the potential inequity going forward without the changes to those boundaries that they recommended.

I think this would at least allow an open venue for rural voters to have their voices heard. So, of course we will support it.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to begin by saying that I think that much of the amendment is good, and I think it actually improves the motion as it was originally proposed to us. I will try to speak to those elements that I find helpful, and then I'll comment a little bit on where I think it still falls short, and we'll see when we get there.

I want to begin by talking about — as we discussed — this first-past-the-post system. It has been our form of electing people — I don't know how far back it goes, but I'm guessing centuries. When I think about the first-past-the-post system, I think, oh yeah, it has done well for a long time. It is actually not what I prefer. I actually think that it's time for electoral reform.

But the reason I'm raising it is because, when we think about our system, we think, oh yeah, it has served Canada for a long time. But if I go back to pre-World War I — at that point, women didn't have the vote. That was our first-past-the-post system. So there are elements to our voting system at all times which I think have seen improvement. In 1960, First Nation citizens finally got the opportunity to vote.

Yet when we think about the first-past-the-post system, we don't think about those flaws. If we had a motion or an amendment in front of us today to talk about whether women or First Nations should be able to vote, no one — no one — would vote against such a thing; we would all support it. Yet, somehow, we had that system for decades. No one noticed or thought it wasn't right?

What I try to ask myself is: When I look at our system today, where are the flaws within it that would allow us to improve it to reflect the will of our citizens better? Fundamentally, this is why this question is so important. I agree with the members opposite that it needs to be independent in how it's looked at. I agree with everybody in this House that we need to not have one party picking the process. I understand that. I will also say that this wasn't a Cabinet approach on our side. I hear members opposite talking about that, but that is not how I have experienced it.

It is important that this issue be accessible for Yukoners. There is no exact answer. As much as I've looked at this situation and listened to it and the debate on it —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Ms. White: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm just trying to find out if we're speaking to the proposed amendment. I'm wondering if we're speaking to matters other than the question under discussion — so Standing Order 19(b)(i).

Speaker: The Minister of Community Services, on the proposed amendment, which I'm trying to find.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am trying to speak to the proposed amendment, Mr. Speaker. From the opposition, I heard debate on the amendment where it was talking about fracking. It was talking about the Electoral District Boundaries Commission. There was a range of issues. I'm trying to draw those into this debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Well, even the proposed amendment from the Member for Lake Laberge in clause 1 is talking about voting systems — even the modification or the amendment is talking about different voting systems. So, you certainly have some leeway on that.

The Minister of Community Services, please.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let me try to draw it for the members opposite. The point that I'm trying to get to here is that, when I first heard the motion as proposed by the Member

for Whitehorse Centre, I thought we were likely to get to this debate. I was looking forward to it.

Even though I am a proponent of electoral reform, I was worried about the wording of the motion, because it was saying very specifically about a proportional representation. I appreciate the Member for Lake Laberge's point in his amendment, which is, that is the question we want to ask to Yukoners. On that side of it, I think that this assists and improves.

Where there were other conversations — another improvement that I saw there is about this notion of whether or not to limit or ban donations. I think those are good things. What I also believe is that you want to allow — say we have a select committee that's working on this and we talk to Yukoners — which is one of the things that would come of it, which is the best part about it — we would also, at that point, have other things that should come forward that we have a difficult time anticipating.

I remember, at one point, being in a — there was an election where it was in the spring, rather than in the fall, and at that point, there were some students at high schools who were able to vote that time. That election really engaged young people. There is — I'm hoping I get her name correct — there is a young woman who started an organization in — a young Yukoner — Ilona Dougherty. She started a group called Apathy is Boring. When I spoke to her about young people and elections, she said to me that, if a young person votes in the first election that they have the ability to vote in, they tend to vote for life, and if they don't vote in their first election, then they don't vote at all. This is one of those things that I hope that we get to in a conversation with Yukoners — about the voting age and what a great voting age would be.

I happen to find young people in high school to be pretty savvy about their politics, and I think that they have an interesting thing, a perspective, that we might think is worth considering in our system.

What I want to say is that, because I don't believe that there is a perfect system — because I respect that there is a range of views for many, many Yukoners — that it's difficult for me, with the original wording of the motion — that the amendment is an improvement for me, because even though I also believe in electoral reform, I think that it is better that we have a motion that says that we are out there to try to engage and be open to the systems.

Here I go with the part where it is still a challenge for me, because the Member for Lake Laberge — when he brought in his proposed amendment, he spoke about rural Yukoners. I think it is incredibly important that we protect rural Yukoners' voices here in this Legislature — very important. But I want, however — let's say it's a select committee or a commission or however we engage with Yukoners — it is there where I want the ability for them to talk about this question and to say to us — and I have a strong sense that even the residents of Whitehorse would acknowledge the importance of supporting our communities and rural Yukoners and trying to make sure — but it is strange to me that we have a proposed amendment which looks first at opening it up or allowing for a range of

perspectives or not prescribing ahead of time where we will go and then at the last adding that prescription in. That isn't as open and constructive as I am hoping for.

The challenge that I think we have here in this Legislature is that we are partisan by our very nature. The way in which we sit in the Legislative Assembly and the way in which we debate these things — we all come from a starting perspective. If I can go back to emphasize — I agree it is important that we find a way that moves beyond our partisan positions.

In prepping for the debate today, I looked back — not only at the motion that we debated in 2017, which was discussed earlier — but I looked also at other motions that were put forward by the Official Opposition. I found three, I believe, which talked about a referendum. I have this sense that all of these things — a select committee that brings us into it, a commission, and a referendum — these are all great ideas. I think that they are terrific.

I don't think, though, that it is easy to get to a solution around electoral reform because it is not a debate where everybody lines up — and that is the challenge. The system itself — we are struggling to try to find a way, as a group of MLAs — to find a system that is fair for all of us and respects the notions of our citizens and trying to find a system that will work for everybody.

I appreciate the amendment. I am stuck, because it is mostly good but has a challenge for me in it — one that I agree with, but that I believe is prescriptive again. My preference would be to have a system that allows the select committee and allows the commission to just engage with Yukoners and, yes, to educate for sure, but to hear their perspectives and to try to find a path through for everybody.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to speak to this motion this afternoon as brought forward by the Member for Whitehorse Centre and to the proposed amendment brought forward by the Member for Lake Laberge.

The way that we elect our leaders in this country is one that has been discussed for many, many, many years. It is central to our democracy. That has been reiterated by many this afternoon, and I certainly echo that sentiment. It is the cornerstone of our democracy. Talking to the citizens of the territory about how we actually choose our community leaders, our representatives, is absolutely one of the most important discussions that we can have as a society.

Canada has gone through this process several times — other jurisdictions over the last several years — and, in the end, all of those processes for change have been rejected. Going into this ourselves, I think we have to be very, very careful about how we actually approach this subject and how we execute on it.

I echo the sentiments of my colleague, the Member for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. It is very prescriptive and perhaps too prescriptive. I echo those concerns with the original motion that was proposed today. I think the amendment goes some way to moderating those problems, but I don't think it goes far enough.

Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to Yukoners during our last election campaign that we would strike a non-partisan commission to consult with Yukoners on this very central tenet of our democracy. We are working very hard to make good on that promise. Again, we are working very hard to make good on that promise. I know that the Premier has been reaching out to his colleagues across the floor, the leaders of the other two parties, to have a conversation about this very important, very central tenet of our democracy. While I understand that the New Democrats have been very happy to meet with the Premier, perhaps our friends in the Official Opposition are not. This is impeding our ability to actually address this issue which is so central to our democracy and so important to so many Yukoners. I find that disappointing, Mr. Speaker; I truly find that disappointing.

We started this process ourselves as a government by going out to Yukoners and asking them about what mattered to them as far as electoral reform. We held a public engagement that went on for about six weeks. I am sure that the members have all familiarized themselves with this document. We discussed options and the priority for the people of the territory identified by Yukoners was that they wanted to make sure that our electoral system captures the intentions of voters as well as possible. Some in our society believe that this first-past-the-post system does not capture the will of the people, and today, with all of the modern techniques we have of vote counting and collecting data, the first-past-the-post system — a piece of paper and a pencil — is very simple, but it perhaps does not do a great job in capturing the will of the people on election day. That's really, I think, at the heart of why the people are so interested in this issue, but it's not an easy issue to peel apart.

As I said, jurisdictions across the country have explored this very issue several times over the last little while and have all been rejected. BC held a referendum on this just in 2018 and it wasn't well understood.

The first-past-the-post system is easy to grasp. Other systems such as proportional representation — which is what the Member for Whitehorse Centre has suggested or sort of named in her motion — is very, very process-driven and it's difficult for people to understand. So, in BC they rejected it.

The first-past-the-post system was endorsed by 61 percent of residents in BC, and 38 percent decided to support proportional representation. But again, when you say "proportional representation" there are various types. There is dual member proportional representation; there is mixed member proportional representation; there is rural-urban. There are various iterations of these things. It is a very complicated question.

I'll tell you that when that question landed on my families' doorsteps, I got calls saying, "What should I do?" I couldn't frankly advise them because I didn't have the materials. When they tried to tell me what it said, it was very, very complicated.

In the end, we have to be very clear to our citizens about what we are proposing. That's going to take some research and some work up front.

Now, to do that work — and in our election platform, we proposed a commission — an independent commission made

up of free-thinking individuals. We reached out to our colleagues across the floor for feedback and input into that process with mixed results. Then, unfortunately for us as everybody knows, the chair of that commission decided to resign. So now here we are, getting a chance at a re-do, which is why the Premier has decided to reach out to the members opposite.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will say that this is an important process. It is an important process for us to deal with properly, and I look forward to further debate on this motion.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Member for Lake Laberge for the amendment to the motion. I will agree with my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, that in the amendment, the first point — deleting of the phrase “the best system to replace the first-past-the-post voting system, including consideration of proportional representation” being taken out and then inserting “whether Yukoners want to replace...” — I won’t read the whole thing — but suffice it to say that, by taking the phrase out about getting rid of the current system — this is one of my fundamental worries when it comes to overly politicizing the process, when it comes to how we move forward into electoral reform. I was — I don’t know how to say it — but I guess demeaned today as far as the former Leader of the Third Party who said that I keep on saying it is overly partisan — well, that’s an example.

This part of the amendment strengthens the original motion, because it doesn’t predetermine for Yukoners that we’re going to take one of what I see as four main systems out of the running, when Yukoners can then decide for themselves: (a) “Do we believe, as Yukoners, that we need to change the current system?” and then (b) “What should be the system that replaces the current system?” I think that’s a fundamental part of the conversation.

I would hazard to also say that the NDP in British Columbia also thought that was an important part of the conversation, because if you take a look at their last process — one of several, but their last process — sorry, not the NDP’s last process, but BC’s last process under the NDP government — that was a fundamental question. That was a fundamental question that went out to the population, first and foremost.

So to try to look at a motion on this side of the House where we’re trying to work with the opposition parties — I cannot start with a conversation that says we’re not going to even let the Yukon public consider the question as to whether or not we need to move on to a new system. That is the first part.

The second part — and this is more of a question back to the Yukon Party: (2) deleting the phrase “; and (4) banning” and inserting in its place the phrase “(4) whether to limit or ban”; — again, strengthening the original, very prescriptive NDP motion — again, I was criticized for somehow creating terms of reference — which were draft terms of reference, by the way — without consulting. Again, here we have draft terms of reference — I would hazard a guess — that were very prescriptive as a way forward. But in having that second phrase, I think that strengthens it because it allows the committee —

the commission, the organization — to go out and to ask Yukoners that question, as opposed to a political party.

The third part to this — I do have a question for the members opposite — for the Yukon Party. What is the actual intent of inserting after item 4 the phrase — and I quote: “and (5) how to ensure that rural Yukoners do not do not...” — and I think that is a typo, so I would argue that maybe this is not necessarily in the right format. I think they just mean “do not” — “... have less of a voice or representation following any changes to the electoral system”. That is an interesting concept, Mr. Speaker.

As many people in the Legislative Assembly know, out of the three proposed changes — if we were going to use a proportional representation model — each one of these has a consideration of new numbers of elected officials in the Legislative Assembly. Some of them would have a consideration that may or may not be determined by a very prescriptive line from the Yukon Party that may not be able to be considered, or it may have some kind of consequence of consideration because of this now new prescriptive line of the Yukon Party.

Again, we have two different opinions from the opposition when it comes to electoral reform already, because I would hazard to guess that, when you take a look at rural-urban proportional representation — it is an interesting mix, and it is a different percentage of an urban vote compared to other models of proportional representation. We know that rural-urban proportional — and I will call it “RUP” — is a hybrid. That would be a hybrid proportional system that would be designed. This was one, again, that was favoured by Fair Vote Canada — if we were going to take a look at a proportional representation model in Canada. In their conversations — and their definition —

Speaker: Order, please.

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

Debate on Motion No. 8, and the proposed amendment, accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled October 23, 2019:

34-3-2

Response to Motion No. 39 re Burma Road improvements and Motion No. 40 re Horse Creek Road and Jackfish Bay road improvements (Mostyn)

The following documents were filed October 23, 2019:

34-3-13

Electoral Reform, letter re (dated October 9, 2019) from Stacey Hassard, Leader of the Official Opposition, to Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier (Cathers)

34-3-14

Electoral Reform, letter re (dated October 17, 2019) from
Stacey Hassard, Leader of the Official Opposition, to Hon.
Sandy Silver, Premier (Cathers)