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HANSARD

Wednesday, November 23, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Fall Sitting

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DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

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Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
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Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, November 23, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Under introduction of visitors, I would like to introduce two individuals from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office: Julia Milnes, Deputy Child and Youth Advocate, and Christopher Tse, systemic analyst.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like my colleagues to help me recognize a few guests here today from Yukon University for the tabling of the university's annual general report and for a tribute on Innovation Week as well: Dr. Lesley Brown, president and vice-chancellor; Blake Buckle, associate vice-president of advancement; and vice-president of finance and administration, Peter Deegan. Thank you for being here.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would also like to welcome to the Assembly today and ask my colleagues to welcome a number of individuals who are here for our tribute to Innovation Week. I would like to welcome Lauren Manekin Beille, who is the department head for innovation entrepreneurship for Yukon University; Kelly Proudfoot, who is working with the team at YuKonstruct this week and helping us to support the work around Innovation Week; Lana Selbee, executive director of YuKonstruct; Cat Kelly, director of entrepreneur programming, is here with us; and Jason Rayner from the Department of Economic Development in support of all of these folks. Also, I would like to welcome Kelly Lu from TechYukon to the Assembly here today.

Applause

Speaker: I would also like to introduce former page Audrey Provan.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Innovation Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Third Party to pay tribute to Yukon Innovation Week. Yukon Innovation Week runs this year from

November 21 to 26 and centres around the theme of “Inspiring transformation”.

Hosted by NorthLight, TechYukon, YuKonstruct, IRP, and Yukon University, Innovation Week provides attendees with an expansive and thought-provoking calendar full of events and workshops for all Yukoners to take part in. These events aim to serve our communities by introducing the innovation ecosystem — community supports that are available — and the idea that all Yukoners are capable of producing innovative solutions to real-world problems.

Attendees at these events can also expect to develop capacity, skills, knowledge, and a mindset for innovation and entrepreneurship. Whether you want to learn a new skill, discuss diverse topics of interest, or attend a screening of films created within a 48-hour time limit, Innovation Week is a prime opportunity for Yukoners to get inspired.

The Yukon is home to many innovators, entrepreneurs, and out-of-the-box thinkers who make this territory the perfect place to live, work, and follow your dreams. Innovation can open doors, break down barriers, and create limitless opportunities for our communities. For example, Yukon innovators are at the forefront of renewable energy, which is assisting our territory in the transition toward a greener, more sustainable, and economically prosperous future.

Additionally, supporting innovative ventures assists in the ongoing advancement of increased local employment, cultural and artistic opportunities, diversification of our economy, and developments in the technology and northern food sectors.

I strongly believe that it is important to support and celebrate the Yukon's innovative thinkers. On Thursday, November 24, the Yukon Transportation Museum will host the third annual Hall of Innovators Awards ceremony. These awards recognize the impressive accomplishments of innovators across the territory. This year, the Hall of Innovators will celebrate recipient awards for notable innovators and the youth innovators in our territory. In addition to this, two amazing Yukoners will receive the lifetime achievement award for their outstanding dedication, vision, and leadership in the innovation community.

I look forward to celebrating all of the honorees who are making a powerful impact on the lives of Yukoners everywhere. I would like to thank all of the sponsors, guest speakers, volunteers, and organizations participating in this year's Yukon Innovation Week. I invite all Yukoners to get involved by participating in any of the incredible events taking place this week, and I ask that you please join me in this opportunity to come together — create, share, empower, and inspire transformation.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Yukon Innovation Week.

This is a week that gives local innovators, entrepreneurs, community organizations, and citizens a chance to effect positive change. The theme is: “Inspiring transformation.”

There were, and are still, so many exciting events that have happened and continue to happen as we go through this week. Let me mention just a few. Joella Hogan and the Yukon Soaps Company held an event on Monday, a paper soap workshop with youth. It was fun activity that was well-received by many in the heart of the Yukon — Mayo. And an event tonight at the Yukon Theatre at 6:00 p.m. showcasing the 48-hour film festival: films done by creative Yukoners within a 48-hour period to be shown on the big screen and then judged. A \$500 award will be presented by sponsor YuKonstruct, and the audience will also get to vote on their favourite.

Tomorrow, November 24, there will be a Soupbox Session for young people from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. Each table will have a list of topics to discuss about how you can make a big or a small change in your life. One can register or drop in at YuKonstruct. Oh, and there's free soup.

There is a big event at the Yukon Transportation Museum from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. tomorrow night, the third annual Hall of Innovators Awards Ceremony: local music, a bar sponsored by Yukon Brewing, and catering by La Petite Maison. This is a free, pre-registered event, and I understand it's a full house.

I love the title of this workshop: Failing Sucks and Rocks — stories about face plants and the art of getting back up. This is self-explanatory, I think, and there are some amazing speakers who will share their experiences. I think this event is also full, but there is a sign-up for a wait-list.

I would have loved to share every event, as they are all worthy, but take the time to visit the webpage for Yukon Innovation Week, and perhaps you will find something that interests you and there's still space to attend.

To connect, to create, and to collaborate with like-minded people is the goal, and we congratulate all the organizers, the sponsors, the venues, and all the attendees. Well done, because you are all winners.

Applause

In recognition of Holodomor Memorial Day

Hon. Mr. Clarke:

I rise today to pay tribute to Holodomor Memorial Day. The fourth Saturday in November is designated Holodomor Memorial Day in recognition of the millions of Ukrainian men, women, and children who perished and suffered during the Great Famine of 1932 and 1933, which Canada recognized as a genocide in 2008.

The famine began when the Soviet regime of Joseph Stalin ordered the collectivization of farms. Many Ukrainians resisted, had their land and animals confiscated, and were forced to work on government collective farms. Impossibly high grain quotas were set, leading authorities to confiscate all grain, seed, and food from the Ukrainian people. Mr. Speaker, the Soviet government forced starving Ukrainians to remain in their country. For many, stealing grain was a matter of survival, but it also became an act punishable by death.

The famine resulted in widespread death. At the height of the famine, in June of 1933, Ukrainians were dying at an estimated rate of 28,000 people per day. Nearly four million

Ukrainians died because they were deliberately deprived of food by the Soviet state. Many others were imprisoned, deported, or executed. For decades, the truth of what happened was avoided or denied in Soviet countries and elsewhere around the world.

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to comprehend the level of suffering and death that was knowingly inflicted upon innocent people. The echoes of this horrific period in history, and the use of these brutal tactics, are tragically seen again today, as the senseless, unjust, and illegal invasion of Ukraine presses on. Ukrainian communities endured then, just as they do now.

The survival of Ukrainian tradition and culture is a testament to the strength, resilience, and perseverance of their people. Canada is home to the world's second largest Ukrainian diaspora descendant community of approximately 1.4 million people. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine earlier this year, the Yukon has welcomed at least 20 Ukrainians seeking refuge. This is in no small part due to the great efforts of local volunteers, sponsors, and organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I reaffirm the Government of Yukon's position of solidarity with Ukrainians during this time of crisis and to honour those who have fought, and continue to fight, for Ukrainian freedom.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: On this 90th anniversary of Holodomor, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize and pay tribute to those who lost their lives during the enforced famine in Ukraine by the deliberate actions of Stalin's communist government and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It was the direct actions of the USSR in the 1920s that worsened the conditions in Ukraine and forced many Ukrainians to flee to countries, such as Canada, which welcomed them with open arms. Throughout the 1920s, Ukrainians found refuge in the Canadian west and the fertile land it offered. It reminded them of home, and they worked the land like they did in Ukraine. They were the lucky ones, as the situation back home turned to genocide in the early 1930s. The law of five stacks of grain passed in 1932 stated that anyone caught taking minuscule amounts of grain from a collective farm would be shot.

The Ukrainian Holodomor commemorates the lives of millions of Ukrainians who starved to death because of the policy imposed by Joseph Stalin's dictatorial regime between 1932 and 1933 alone. This act was aimed at destroying the national, cultural, and democratic aspirations of the Ukrainian people — ideals that their descendants must still fight for today. Historians estimate that close to seven million people died during this period — one-third of whom were children. It is said that the Ukrainian people died at a rate of 24,000 people a day at the height of the famine. This famine was a result of the Ukrainian crops being confiscated and people isolated by the army, unable to receive aid or food from neighbouring nations. The Soviet regime commenced a campaign against nationalists — “deviations”, as they were called. Much of the Ukrainian culture's elite were repressed or perished in the course of the

1930s. Arrests followed by imprisonment, exile, or execution decimated the ranks of the intellectuals who opposed.

My family, trying to flee, lost all male members to execution, with the youngest being 16 years old. Moving across Europe, family members were born in different countries. My father was born in Austria. They eventually immigrated to Canada because they had family here who had come earlier. So, today, we honour those who lost their lives during Holodomor and stand with the survivors and family members of those who experienced this torture. It is a scary time for Ukraine right now, as its people are suffering still, this time at the hands of Vladimir Putin's regime.

So, Slava Ukraini.

Applause

Ms. White: Today, the Yukon NDP stands in solidarity with Ukrainian people around the world in memory of Holodomor, the Great Famine.

Holodomor has been recognized by Ukraine and many other countries as a genocide carried out by the Soviet regime against the Ukrainian people. This man-made famine in the former Soviet Union caused the death of millions of men, women, and children who fell victim to the cruel actions and policies of the totalitarian regime.

The Great Famine took the innocent lives of many millions of people and became a national tragedy for the Ukrainian people. We also honour the memory of millions of Russians, Kazakhs, and those of other nationalities who died of starvation in the Volga River region, northern Caucasus, Kazakhstan, and other parts of the former Soviet Union as a result of civil war and forced collectivization. It changed the face of a country and a people forever. The horrific actions left deep scars, and those scars have been reopened since Russia again declared war against Ukraine.

Today, we see the actions from 90 years ago repeated with the Russian Federation's use of food as a weapon. This action threatens the world's stability by once again taking the grain from the breadbasket of Europe and keeping it from those who need it. The actions of the past must not be forgotten or allowed to be repeated.

Slava Ukraini.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McLean: Pursuant to section 53(3) of the *Yukon University Act*, I have for tabling the university's 2021-22 annual report and their audited financial statement for the year ending March 31, 2022.

Mr. Speaker, I also have for tabling the Yukon government's response to the recent report from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate, which is dated November 22, 2022.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have for tabling two legislative returns.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling three legislative returns in my role as Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission and three legislative returns in my role as Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation.

Mr. Dixon: I have for tabling the most recent annual report of the Child Development Centre.

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling a letter of support from the Kwanlin Dün First Nation in support of Bill No. 305.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to ensure that our hospitals have the financial resources they need by taking action including:

(1) providing the Yukon Hospital Corporation additional funding this fiscal year to compensate for the impact of inflation; and

(2) providing the Yukon Hospital Corporation additional funding this fiscal year to address increased costs associated with the pandemic.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to direct parents and families of current and former Jack Hlland Elementary School students to where they can find information on whether or not their child was subject to holds and seclusion.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the contractor responsible for clearing the right-of-way on the Takhini River Road to ensure the safety of drivers and residents by:

(1) harvesting firewood and stacking it in a safe manner for use by Takhini River Road residents;

(2) clearing brush and debris from roadways and trails; and

(3) chipping organic matter left by this work in such a way as to be compostable.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Internet connectivity

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Our government continues to work hard to ensure all Yukoners are able to stay connected. Many people in our country take Internet access for granted. We Yukoners know that disruptions in Internet access can and do

occur. These severances in connection have a significant impact on our work, our families and friends, our health, and our overall way of life in modern times. This connection for those deep in the bush with no neighbours in sight or those far down the river from Dawson with only boat or snowmobile access to their secluded residences are absolutely vital. In an emergency, this might be the only line to help available.

I was pleased to see that Xplore, formerly Xplornet, recently announced that they would be extending their satellite Internet services to Yukoners until September 2023. While the responsibility of managing and regulating satellite services ultimately rests with the Government of Canada, our government understands the importance of connectivity across the Yukon. This is why we advocate for Yukoners, as best we can, at every opportunity. When we were first alerted to Xplore's plans to end service in the Yukon, I immediately began working with my federal counterpart at Innovation, Science, and Economic Development. Our initial work with the federal government and Xplornet a number of years ago led to an extension to December 31 of this year.

During that time, Starlink, a new type of satellite Internet service, announced their intention to provide service to the Yukon. Starlink's announcement provided some comfort to rural Yukoners. However, Starlink did not initially believe that they would be able to provide service until the first quarter of 2023. This left us with a possible gap of service. As Yukoners, we are no strangers to going without phone or Internet coverage and we often do so by choice. However, there is a difference between wanting to have no network and not having a choice in the matter.

Our government is committed to providing modern infrastructure that allows Yukoners to be connected in our rapidly advancing world. This means that we can pay our bills and do our banking online. We can video-call our relatives around the world, and if our jobs allow, we can work remotely from the comfort of our homes. None of these things can be done without access to the Internet. That is why, when rural Yukoners were facing this gap in Internet service, we continued to express concerns with the president and CEO of Xplore. I also sent a joint letter with the Northwest Territories Minister of Finance requesting that the federal government find a solution, given their role in regulating and funding broadband initiatives in Canada.

The announcement from Xplore to extend satellite service until September 2023 was indeed welcome news. Mr. Speaker, through our efforts, we have helped to ensure that rural Yukoners will have uninterrupted satellite Internet services. I am proud that our government played a part in making this happen.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank Xplore for listening to the needs of Yukoners and extending their service until next September as well. We welcome the Starlink system, which will fill the gap and offer Yukoners another option for accessing the Internet.

However, I am quite confused by this "pat on the back" ministerial statement from the member opposite, especially the

line — and I'll quote: "When we were first alerted to Xplore's plans to end service in the Yukon, I immediately began working with my federal counterpart at Innovation, Science, and Economic Development."

So, Mr. Speaker, the government first found out about this plan to end service back in August 2020. Now, the current minister was, of course, sitting in the Speaker's chair at the time. I seem to recall a social media post from the former minister in October 2020 which showed him leaning back in his chair while on the phone with Telesat's president discussing the situation. So, I'm curious: How can the minister say that he immediately began working with his federal counterpart when he was sitting in the Speaker's chair at the time the Yukon government found out about the shutdown? It seems, Mr. Speaker, that this is just some more unreliable information coming from the government benches.

Ms. Tredger: I can speak quite personally to this issue because my parents are entirely dependent on Xplornet for communications at their home on the Pelly River, far from cell service or radio signals. They used to have options for communicating such as the radio-phone network to make phone calls or AM radio to get critical news. All of those have been replaced by Internet and no longer exist.

The importance of Internet, their only method of communication, was highlighted last summer when lightning struck near their home and a forest fire began burning. Their neighbours used the Internet to call in the fire. My parents checked fire maps, connected with fire services, and waited for updates on whether they should be evacuating. They called me, my siblings, and their friends, who volunteered to help prepare for the fire. Without Internet, they would have been entirely cut off from the world with an active forest fire burning less than a kilometre away.

My parents are hardly the only ones in this situation. Across the Yukon, people outside of municipalities are dependent on satellite Internet to keep them connected and safe or operate their businesses. Internet is critical infrastructure. It is the responsibility of this government to make sure Yukoners have access to that critical infrastructure.

So, we are very happy to hear that Xplornet has been extended. We hope that the Yukon government will consider it to be its responsibility to ensure that satellite Internet solutions continue to exist for everyone who needs them.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the comments from the members opposite. Just a brief response to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — hopefully, I was clear in my initial statement that, when I came to this role, I was tasked with seeking an extension of the service into next year, but I certainly do commend the former Minister of Highways and Public Works for his yeoman work on the file previously.

Internet access is crucial for the health and safety of all Yukoners, especially those who are living in isolated situations where help for emergencies is not close by. We know that Yukoners' quality of life depends on reliable connectivity, whether they are in a city or in a rural community. This is the

reason that, among other services, we are building the Dempster fibre line to ensure Internet redundancy.

Of course, the Yukon Party talked about this project for years but never took action. Under our Liberal government, this project is under construction. Work continues to advance on this project to extend 800 kilometres along the Dempster Highway from Dawson to Inuvik in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners deserve access to infrastructure that works and that meets their needs. This project also supports economic diversification and will help grow the Yukon's digital ecosystem. This type of investment was long overdue. When we took office in 2016, the Yukon was in an infrastructure deficit. I am proud of our government in its steadfastness of commitment to building up resilient communities across the territory. Investing in infrastructure like telecommunications is investing in the Yukon's future.

While this work is important, we must remember that some of our more remotely located Yukoners still rely on satellite to stay connected. While the extension of Xplore services into 2023 is welcome, positive news, it is still necessary that Yukoners who rely on satellite services look to a new satellite service — that of Starlink. Starlink satellites will significantly improve Internet speeds, allowing rural Yukoners to have access to more reliable Internet services and better quality video and phone calls.

On Monday of this week, Starlink announced that its service is now available across all of Canada and Alaska. According to my officials in Highways and Public Works, with this announcement, Starlink has indicated that it has started processing orders for the Yukon and is arranging to ship satellite terminals to customers here in the territory. This is indeed an exciting announcement ahead of what Starlink initially expected for its operations.

At this time as well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our Member of Parliament, Dr. Brendan Hanley, for all his hard work advocating for Yukoners' connectivity as well. I know I speak for many when I say that our MP's dialogue with the federal government, as well as the president and CEO of Xplore, went a long way toward ensuring that any gaps in Internet services would be covered. That makes all the difference for Yukoners in remote regions.

I am honoured to do this kind of advocacy work on behalf of Yukoners, and I will continue to work toward a connected, modern Yukon.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school, Child and Youth Advocate review

Mr. Cathers: It has been several weeks since the Child and Youth Advocate released her scathing report about the Liberal government's handling of sexualized abuse in a Yukon school.

One of the key areas of concern identified in the report was the untimely and disorganized way that students, staff, and the school community as a whole were offered therapeutic

supports. According to the report, this resulted in delays and gaps in service. The report found that the YCAO — and I quote: "... heard from numerous families and educators that access to services was not timely, sufficient, or developmentally appropriate."

Can the minister tell us what changes she has implemented since receiving this report that outlines the failings of her and her department's handling of this issue?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I want to first thank the Child and Youth Advocate — and I know that we have members of her office here today in the Legislative Assembly — for the work that she did on the report regarding Hidden Valley Elementary School and the issues that have happened there and the unfortunate actions of a former employee of the Department of Education. We appreciate that work that the Child and Youth Advocate did. I was able to table our response today in the Legislative Assembly to the report that we received in October 2022. Government of Yukon is grateful again for the thorough and careful work of the Child and Youth Advocate in conducting her review.

We have accepted all of the recommendations in principle in the October 2022 review and are committed to continuing system-wide corrective action. The report's recommendations have helped us to re-examine, refine, and enhance our existing commitments to ensure a strengthened student- and child-centred approach. Again, I thank the Child and Youth Advocate for her thorough work.

Mr. Cathers: I asked the minister what changes she had implemented and she didn't answer the question.

Another area of considerable concern identified by the advocate in her scathing report of the minister and her department's handling of this was in relation to lack of communication with parents, families, and the school community. Here is what the Child and Youth Advocate's report said — and I quote: Education's "... lack of action and poor communication with affected parties and with the public have called into question whether their policies and systems are adequate to prevent similar situations in the future."

Even worse, the report goes on to say: "The Advocate has heard from the affected families that the inadequacy of response has added to the trauma..."

Can the Minister of Education update the Legislature on what communication policy changes, if any, she has implemented since receiving this scathing report?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We will continue to ensure that the well-being of Yukon children remains the centre of our decision-making and actions. There is nothing more important than that. I take my role very seriously, as Minister of Education. We have taken significant action and will continue to address the issues that have been identified in this report and others.

I remind folks that I launched a review into the Hidden Valley matters that unfolded over the last year and a bit, and we received and had a thorough review of the actions and work of our departments. We received a report from Amanda Rogers. We actioned that right away, and it has resulted in a safer schools action plan that is very thorough. There are 23 actions

arising from seven recommendations of that report; 13 of them are complete. Much of that work is ongoing and is targeted at being completed by spring of 2023.

Mr. Cathers: Again, the minister and her department have continued to fail families. The Child and Youth Advocate found it unacceptable that communications following the 2019 criminal incident were, in her words, “ostensibly self-serving” and that the department was more concerned with the legalities and HR implications of the incident than the well-being of impacted students.

Specifically, the Child and Youth Advocate highlighted the decision not to send a letter drafted by the then-principal to the school committee in December 2019, calling this — and I quote — a “gross oversight”.

Will the minister now acknowledge what the Child and Youth Advocate called a “gross oversight” in the Department of Education’s handling of communications following this criminal incident?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I guess I’ll go back a little bit and just talk again about the work of the Department of Education, which has absolutely been focused on continuing to uphold the dedicated staff at Hidden Valley and continues to work with providing a range of supports, including access to counselling, which will continue to be available. No family will be left behind.

We increased staffing support in 2021 at Hidden Valley and have again in 2022-23. I know that you are speaking directly about the communications, Mr. Speaker. Part of the safer schools action plan includes new protocol and policy around communication, which has been enacted in all of our schools. We’ve had very specific training with administrators.

I thank the administrators from across the territory who came together early, prior to the school year starting, to be trained in the safer schools new policy and to become very familiar with post-incident communication and guidance, which is being followed.

Question re: Child Development Centre services wait-list

Mr. Dixon: The Child Development Centre is a not-for-profit organization that provides essential therapeutic services and support for all Yukon children from birth to kindergarten. In their most recent annual report, the Child Development Centre raised the alarm bell about the growing issue of wait times to access those essential services. According to that report, there’s a wait-list for all therapy services in Whitehorse and there were 145 children waiting for 174 services in Whitehorse. According to the report — and I quote: “This is the equivalent to 8 kindergarten classes.” Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker: There’s a wait-list for these essential therapeutic services to support Yukon children equivalent to eight kindergarten classes.

Can the Liberal government tell us what they have done since these stats were released to help the CDC reduce this wait-list?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Education and Health and Social Services work collaboratively with partners, including the

Child Development Centre, to improve ways to provide the best services and supports to Yukon children and families.

We acknowledge and very much appreciate the Child Development Centre’s important work helping families and children to access inclusive early learning and therapeutic services. The Child Development Centre also provides supports to educators working with children with diverse developmental needs and licensed early learning and childcare centres.

I have had opportunity to sit with the Child Development Centre board and staff to talk about the important work that they are doing and to hear some of the challenges that they have. In 2021-22, the department funded the CDC to undertake a review of services, and they have since shared two reports — the Child Development Centre strategic planning and the structural renewal report and a summary of funding requests, structural renewal, and collective bargaining as well.

Again, Child Development Centre is a really important service that we will continue to support and work with.

Mr. Dixon: While I appreciate the minister’s acknowledgment that the work of the CDC is important, my question was specifically: What work has been done to reduce the wait times? An equivalent of eight kindergarten classes is a considerable wait-list. The CDC relies on government funding, and the minister has referenced this already. If the government doesn’t increase their funding, then it will be extremely difficult for them to address the massive wait-list of children waiting for supports. According to the minister’s briefing notes, the 2022-23 budget for the CDC is approximately \$3.3 million. It also notes that the CDC is seeking an increase to their budget to help address these growing wait times for children and families.

So, will the minister agree to increase the funding to CDC to help address wait times for the important services that they provide?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we very much value the work of the CDC. We are providing approximately \$3.4 million in operational funding for the CDC, which includes funding to cover the collective agreement increases. We’re working closely with them to also support the work of ensuring that they are able to be in a space together. So, there are significant commitments from our government to support the renovation, the outfitting, and furnishings of the new building that they will hopefully be occupying very soon.

So, again, we’re working very closely. We also funded the work that I had just mentioned around strategic planning. In terms of assessment, we’re working to develop localized criteria around prioritizing assessments and ensuring student learning needs are being addressed. The length of time to perform an assessment is dependant on the complexity of the student’s needs, the nature of the assessment needed, and the schedule of the professional administering the assessments.

When we met with CDC, we talked about how we can work together to ensure that children are assessed in a timely manner.

Mr. Dixon: While I appreciate the information the minister provided, it’s not what I asked. My question was

specifically about the wait times that so many Yukon families are facing in accessing the services of the CDC.

I want to stress for the minister that the size of the wait-list for the Child Development Centre is a major issue to a lot of Yukon families. The most recent annual report shows that not only are there 145 children waiting on 174 services in Whitehorse, but the number of children who have been waiting more than six months for services was at 41. It is incumbent upon the government to provide the CDC with adequate resources to eliminate this wait-list.

Now, I know that the CDC has met with the minister; she has acknowledged that. So, my question is very simple: Will the government provide the CDC with sufficient resources to eliminate this wait-list?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, yes, we will continue to work with our partners at the Child Development Centre. They provide very important services. When I met with them, we talked about earlier interventions so that children coming into the school system are able to begin addressing issues that may be there and to be able to start kindergarten better prepared to learn. Our government is making a lot of investments in this area. Reimagining inclusive and special education is very much tied to this work.

I am really happy to see that the Leader of the Official Opposition is now interested in these types of services and I think, also, just being interested in solutions for early learning and childcare and our K to 12 system, because I certainly know that there was a lack of that for the 14 years that they were in government and paid very little attention to these issues that our government is taking very seriously, and we are addressing them.

Question re: Wetlands protection

Ms. Tredger: This government talks a lot about carbon emissions from burning fuel, but that is not the only way that carbon is released into the atmosphere; disturbing wetlands is another. Wetlands store huge amounts of carbon, and every time that we build a mine or another development in a wetland, this carbon is released, contributing to climate change. In the past, the minister has said that, before they can do anything, they have to figure out exactly how much carbon is being released when our wetlands are disturbed.

Well, while he was making excuses, other people did the work. Last week, CPAWS released their report, which provides estimates of carbon released from wetlands in the Indian River region. They estimate that, in that region alone, yearly carbon released from wetland disturbances could cancel out all the reductions from YG's plans to improve public and active transportation.

So, now that the minister knows — for sure — that significant amounts of carbon really are being released when we disturb wetlands, will he act?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I meet very often with the folks at the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Yukon. I was just there recently, actually, when they were saying a fond farewell to their executive director.

The last several times that I have met with CPAWS Yukon, we discussed the issue of wetlands. I talked to him about getting some real science research behind this; I appreciate that they did an investigation. I wouldn't call that, sort of, authoritative science. They say so right at the beginning of the report. I have tabled the report right here in the Legislative Assembly, and right at the beginning, they say, Look, we aren't scientists; this isn't our field of research — but they made some estimates.

Again, whenever we look at this issue, we also need to acknowledge that placer miners are doing reclamation work, and we should assess whether that is changing the amount of carbon that is stored over time. It is an important topic to investigate, and I have offered to work with industry, with the environmental organizations, and to fund research that we all agree on that will help us to understand what the scope of this problem is and to get a better understanding on it.

Ms. Tredger: I am shocked but not surprised to hear the minister say it is not real science, since last week he insulted CPAWS in the media by saying they need to — quote: "... tighten up the science..."

So, let's look at the government's own attempts at a wetlands policy. The last draft of the wetlands policy made no mention of tracking carbon emissions from the destruction of peatlands. That policy has been in the works for years, and in the meantime, the minister has continued to allow the destruction of wetlands with no consideration for greenhouse gas emissions. The report from CPAWS states: "Not knowing the magnitude of these emissions is a massive blind spot for the Government of Yukon."

The wetlands policy is supposed to be out by the end of the year. If we really are weeks away from the release of the wetlands policy, as promised, surely the minister knows if it will include tracking of carbon emissions — so, will it?

Will the government finally start tracking carbon emissions from the destruction of wetlands?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I will say is that, whenever I made those comments publicly, I certainly have made them directly with CPAWS Yukon. In fact, I think I have a meeting coming up with them again in short order. We have a very respectful relationship, and I have talked with them about the importance of getting science on this. You know, I also happened to table a response to that report from the Klondike Placer Miners' Association.

Look, I don't want to get into an argument back and forth about this. What I would like to do is to get some good science on it. The purpose of the original work on the wetlands strategy wasn't around greenhouse gas emissions, but the good thing is, we are getting that framework in place, and it will provide us a place that, if and when we do find that there are issues around wetlands, first what we'll do is work with placer miners to get their reclamation working so that they decrease any emissions and possibly even enhance the store of carbon. That's important. Then we can always adjust the wetlands strategy.

Ms. Tredger: It's an old, old story we are hearing. When the government doesn't want to act, they say they have to wait for more information. When a group like CPAWS brings them the data, they say it is not good enough. As they continue to

stall, wetlands are being irreversibly destroyed, carbon is being released, and our hopes of slowing climate change are slipping away.

This government says they don't have enough information to take climate action, but somehow, they do have enough information to approve mines and the destruction of wetlands. If the members opposite disagree with me, I would love to be proven wrong.

So, will the minister halt development in undisturbed wetlands until he has all the data he thinks he needs to protect them?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The report that CPAWS Yukon put out, the emissions that they estimated could be there was about one percent of our overall emissions. All right. And still, I think that's significant. We do need to look at it. In fact, from the very first meeting that I have had with CPAWS Yukon — and I meet with them, I believe, four times a year in person, sitting down, respectfully talking through these issues — we have said that we will work with them to get better science. I would be ever so happy to share that science here with the Legislative Assembly for all of us to see.

I have said all along that what we want to do is make sure that the way in which we have mining — whether that be placer mining, whether that be hardrock mining — that we work to reduce our emissions.

I have said to the industry that we are working to net zero by 2050, and we will continue that path. Now, that's on a whole bunch of fronts; it's not just on wetlands. It's on the use of emissions; it's on the fact that we need mining. Mining is critical to move off fossil fuels, and at the same time, it's critically important that we get mining right. I want to say, in working with the industry, they have always been open to doing that work, and I want to thank them for that hard work.

Question re: Carbon tax exemptions for home heating fuel

Mr. Istchenko: Later today, we will vote on a motion that I tabled calling on the federal government to remove the carbon tax from home heating fuel. This has been an issue that provinces across the country have raised with the federal government, as citizens in all regions are facing the extreme challenges of inflation and rising home heating fuel costs.

So, will the Yukon Liberals support my motion and send a message to Ottawa that now is not the time to increase the cost of home heating for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we have seen, right across Canada, the federal government putting new requirements into their federal carbon pricing mechanisms. What we have seen is home fuel being taken off of those rebate programs that existed in the Maritimes and also in the Northwest Territories, and we have seen the rationale from the federal government as to why these are being taken out, as far as the price signal. We have also, in Yukon, been able to, with all-party support here in the Legislative Assembly, keep our rebates intact so that we have more determination now than other jurisdictions, including the Maritime provinces, that are losing their rebates.

So, I want, on the one hand, to thank the members opposite for supporting our rebates for carbon pricing here locally — and also, hopefully they recognize as well the parameters that the federal government is setting when it comes to what is kept in region-specific carbon-pricing mechanisms and rebates.

Mr. Istchenko: So, the October fuel price survey published by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics paints a clear picture of the incredible burden that home heating fuel costs will put on Yukoners this winter. Here in Whitehorse, furnace oil is almost 60 percent higher than it was last year. In my community of Haines Junction, the price of fuel oil is just under 67 percent higher than it was last year. I have heard from constituents who struggled last year, so I know that the 67-percent increase will be too much to bear for them this year.

An easy way to reduce that increase would be to remove the carbon tax from home heating fuel. The Yukon Liberals are one of the few governments left in the country that support keeping the carbon tax on home heating fuel. So, if they speak up, we are sure that the Trudeau Liberals will listen, so will they vote in favour of my motion later today?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Here are the ways that we are working to try to support Yukoners: We raised minimum wage; we have cut the small business tax rate; we have introduced universal, affordable childcare; we have provided an inflation relief rebate on electrical bills; and we have provided a firewood rebate.

The thing that the member opposite is asking about is the price on carbon and how that is rebated. The thing is that we take a look at all the money that individual Yukoners pay into this. We rebate more than that to Yukoners. I asked the Department of Finance recently what that means for low-income Yukoners, and on average, 85 percent of Yukoners will get back more money than they are paying in.

So, that's the way in which we are supporting Yukoners. It's important that we work through programs like the Better Buildings program to find ways to break the dependency on fossil fuels, because we need to transition Yukoners off of fossil fuels and we need to put that support out there. We don't want to continue the dependency that the Yukon Party is interested in through LNG plants.

Question re: Fuel and carbon taxes

Ms. McLeod: Another huge issue facing Yukoners is the soaring price of food. In October, the CBC reported that food prices were increasing 11.4 percent, which is the fastest pace of increases in grocery bills since 1981. Here in the Yukon, with so much of our food transported into the Yukon by truck, the fuel price is the main driver of food prices. The most impactful way the Yukon government can influence the fuel price is with the fuel tax.

Will the Yukon government help address food prices by cutting the fuel tax?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I see a theme here on the Yukon Party trying their best to remain dependent on fossil fuels in all of what they would do for rebates for Yukoners.

We do have one of the lowest gas taxes in the country. The Yukon Party's plan is to invest in fossil fuels by building a

diesel plant. Our approach is different. We want to invest in renewables. We want to invest in affordable energy. We are investing in things like public transport with the City of Whitehorse, and we have introduced a suite of initiatives, actually, for people to transition toward electric bikes and vehicles.

The Yukon Party opposed carbon pricing, and now we're hearing them talk about how they would maybe re-jig the system for fossil fuels. But again, Mr. Speaker, we see the opposition continuing to take a look at how we can do our best to subsidize fossil fuels when the Liberal Party has invested in getting off of fossil fuels, making lives affordable for Yukoners. It's a different approach than the Yukon Party, but I think it's more sustainable in the long run.

Question re: Inclusive and special education

Mr. Kent: Last fall, several parents of children who require additional learning supports went to the media to raise concerns about the long wait times for psychoeducational assessments — some as long as two or three years. These assessments are done by specially trained psychologists who look at how a child learns, as well as barriers to learning that the child may face. In many cases, such an assessment is necessary for parents to access particular educational supports.

So, can the minister tell us what actions she has taken on this important issue since last year and if wait times are still as long as two to three years?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I guess I'll start here. The 2019 audit and the final report of the review of inclusive and special education tell us that we have to rethink how we're supporting students and delivering timely, effective supports for their learning needs. We're working to develop localized criteria around prioritizing assessment and ensuring that student learning needs are being addressed. The length of time to perform an assessment is really dependent on the complexity of the student's needs and the nature of the assessment needed and the schedule of the professional administering the assessment.

If a student needs a formal assessment, school staff may still implement many strategies, supports, and accommodations recommended through school-based teams and informal assessments to address the learning need of the student so that they can be successful at school.

There are many supports that are in place in schools such as speech and language pathologists, educational psychologists, school community consultants, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and others that I'll continue to build on.

Mr. Kent: So, the parents who spoke out in the media said that the two- to three-year wait time for those assessments was unacceptably long. The executive director of the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon agreed with parents and said that an up to three-year wait in the public system was absolutely not an appropriate length of time.

So, can the minister tell us if she has increased funding to this area to reduce the wait times, and if so, by how much?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, very important topic that we're talking about today — the needs of children as they enter into our educational system and even prior to entering into our

educational system. I think that this is definitely part of this discussion — that as we reimagine inclusive and special education, we're looking at our whole system. Our government has made significant changes, Mr. Speaker, in terms of moving early learning and childcare under the Department of Education and really working as a whole system approach in terms of working toward early intervention with children. We just talked about the Child Development Centre and the work that they do and that so many of our other partners are doing.

Our Department of Education continues to look at ways to reduce those wait times. I want to be clear to Yukoners that we are not waiting for assessments to happen. As those wait-lists continue to decrease, we are providing services to students. We work with our school-based teams to ensure that there are supports in place for students as they await those formal assessments.

Mr. Kent: So, my question was whether or not the minister had increased funding to reduce these wait times, and I don't believe I received a response.

So, these psychoeducational assessments are important because not only can they help identify specialized learning approaches for both parents and educators, but they can also result in the child receiving an official diagnosis. An official diagnosis is often required for students to be eligible for certain funding and supports from various levels of government. Some parents are seeking private assessments, given the long wait times, and many have noted that there is a significant cost when they are forced to seek a private assessment as opposed to one offered through the Department of Education.

So, are there financial supports available to parents who are required to pay out of pocket for psychoeducational assessments as a result of the two to three year wait time for the publicly funded option?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we're talking about important services for children and families in our educational system. We're working very hard to reimagine our education system.

I think it's really great that the Yukon Party opposition are interested now in education. I know they don't like it when we say this, but they were in charge of our education system for 14 years. All of these issues that we are dealing with have taken some time to get to where we are. These are systems and approaches that really othered children in so many ways and that is what the Yukon Party led. We are working our way out of that. The Auditor General report points us in new directions in terms of really embracing our children and not othering them, not pushing them into other spaces. They have a right to be in classrooms with other children, and so many of our issues that we are dealing with are a result of neglect of our system for a long time.

Speaker: The time for the Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 305: *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 305, standing in the name of Ms. Blake.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin that Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, be now read a second time.

Ms. Blake: I am honoured today to introduce Bill No. 305, an act to establish the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a general holiday to take place on September 30 annually. When I was preparing for this bill, I was reminded of when my predecessor, the late Darius Elias, the then-MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, spoke about truth and reconciliation in this House. Seven years ago, he stood in this House and spoke truth to power on the legacy of colonial governments and the harm they caused to indigenous people. I am honoured that I have been able to call on his wisdom and his past words when thinking about what I would say today.

This bill, if adopted, would ensure that every Yukoner has the space and time to reflect and honour the people and families impacted by the legacy of the residential school system and a space to remember all of the children who did not get to come home.

I will begin by providing context as to why this bill is so important to the action we take as leaders who represent our communities. If we are truly committed to reconciliation, this bill is a very important step toward to this goal.

For generations, colonial governments — both federal and territorial — used the residential school system, the health care system, the justice system, the child welfare system, and many more as tools to harm and kill indigenous people. These systems worked exactly as leaders at the time had planned: They destroyed entire societies of indigenous people.

Colonization stripped us of our culture, our language, our practices, our social bonds, the bonds with our children and our ancestors, our lands, our traditional knowledge, our traditional items, and our way to see the world around us. Today, so many indigenous people are not fluent in their own language or their own culture. My own community, the Dagudh Gwich'in, have ceased to exist as a recognized group of people because of this genocide.

You'll note that the preamble of this bill uses the word "genocide". When I drafted this bill, the use of that word was intentional. The legacy of colonization and violence against indigenous people in Canada fits directly under the United Nations' definition in the genocide convention, which states — and I quote: "... genocide means any of the following acts

committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

"(a) Killing members of the group;

"(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

"(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

"(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

"(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

Each of these examples of genocide have been committed against indigenous people all across Canada, including here in the Yukon Territory. For points (a), (b), and (c), children and adults have died at the hands of colonial governments. Colonization has caused both physical harm and mental distress by way of discrimination, seizure of children, wrongful imprisonment, forced relocation of entire communities, destruction of our means of subsistence and ways of life, loss of culture, the destruction of our social fabric and political systems, and the death or disappearance of thousands of children in the residential school system.

Point (c) is also illustrated by the chronic underfunding of public services for indigenous children, as proven by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal 2016 decision on First Nation child welfare, which found the Government of Canada's flawed and inequitable provision of First Nation child welfare services to be discriminatory on the prohibited grounds of race and national or ethnic origin.

Point (d) can be illustrated by the report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights of Canada, dated June 2021 — and I quote: "The committee's preliminary hearings on forced and coerced sterilization confirmed its concerns that this horrific practice is not confined to the past but clearly is continuing today. Its prevalence in underreported and underestimated. The committee is deeply concerned that along with Indigenous women, other vulnerable and marginalized groups in Canada are affected, including women with disabilities, racialized women, intersex children and institutionalized persons."

Of course, point (e) clearly describes the residential school system, which forcibly removed indigenous children from their homes and communities to schools that further systemically harmed them. It also can be illustrated by the Sixties Scoop. It is also highlighted in the Canadian human rights decision I just mentioned, which tied lack of funding to the number of First Nation children in care — and I quote: "... acknowledging] the suffering of those First Nations children and families who are or have been denied an equitable opportunity to remain together or to be reunited in a timely manner."

There are so many examples.

I want to take a moment to speak specifically about residential schools. These schools were a systemic and explicit part of genocide. For generations, the official policy of Canada was to kill the Indian in the child. For over 100 years, these schools stole children from their homes, their families, and their

communities. This didn't just harm and traumatize the children who were taken; entire communities were left without any children in them. I've heard stories of entire villages that fell silent once the residential school system took the children. There were no children to run, laugh, and play; there were no children to learn knowledge passed down from our elders, aunts, and uncles.

The federal government legislated this genocide through all of the systems that they created and forced us into, as indigenous people across Canada. There is no greater power over people than the threat of incarceration or being in violation of the law. I have learned, through oral history in my own community, how the federal government used these threats against parents to force them to give up their children to be sent to residential schools and the child welfare system.

We, as indigenous people, are still bearing the consequences of residential schools today. Every community in the Yukon has, and continues to be, directly impacted by this system. Let us remember that the last residential school in Canada only closed in 1996 in Saskatchewan. All of us in this House were either teenagers or adults in 1996. I know that, in the fall of 1996, I was leaving my family, my community, and support system and moving farther away from my culture to go to high school in Whitehorse. It is hard to believe that there was a residential school system closing at that time.

As we build our communities back up, unmarked graves are still being uncovered on residential school sites. In spite of all of this, we have fought so hard to not let our culture die. Over seven years ago, in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released 94 calls to action after the important and difficult work of collecting the stories of residential school survivors, loved ones, and community members.

Call to action 80 calls on governments to establish a statutory holiday, a national day for truth and reconciliation, to honour children who never returned home, survivors, their families, and communities. The federal government has fulfilled this call to action, but the Yukon government has not. This is just one of the many calls to action that Yukoners are waiting for this government to commit to.

A statutory holiday is a vital step in moving from reconciliation to "reconciliation". If there are concerns from businesses about the number of stat holidays, we are in full support of removing an existing colonial stat holiday to add national truth and reconciliation day. It is so important to acknowledge that Yukoners are impacted by the residential school system in many unique ways and find healing in different ways, too.

By providing a statutory holiday, Yukoners will have the space and time they need to heal in a way that is best for them. Some people may spend time in solitude to quietly reflect on the resilience of their families to get here today. Others might participate in cultural activities like sacred ceremonies, dancing, and drumming with their community. Others still might take their children to educational events to share the history of Yukon First Nations with a future generation.

This year, I was able to spend September 30 healing in my own way while acknowledging my own family and my home community's history with residential schools. On truth and reconciliation day this year, I was grateful to join the Northern Nations Alliance — Warriors Walk for Healing Nations. I was able to connect with the powerful organizers of this walk and many other walkers, young and old. We started at the Choooutla residential school site in Carcross on the Carcross/Tagish First Nation traditional territory and began walking all the way to the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre in downtown Whitehorse.

It was important for me to acknowledge all former students of Choooutla residential school, as many citizens from Old Crow also attended that school. I attended this walk on behalf of the community of Vuntut Gwitchin and the children who never made it home and all those who attended residential schools across Yukon and Canada. There were children from Old Crow who never came home, and to this day, families still do not know why they disappeared or where those children are. At the school site, I reflected on my own position in the legacy of residential schools. As a Vuntut Gwitchin citizen and a daughter of a residential school survivor, I feel the weight of this legacy in all of the work that I do and in my daily life as I raise my own children and connect with the many youth across our territory.

We walked together dressed in orange along the south Klondike Highway. Cars honked in support as we walked by drumming and singing in Yukon First Nation languages. On my eighth kilometre, one car slowed to a stop and a young man got out of his car to approach me. He asked me with curiosity and kindness what our walk meant. I shared with him what I have shared today in this House, and he thanked me and told me that he had no idea that September 30 was National Truth and Reconciliation Day. He told me how thankful and excited he was to see us walking and bringing awareness to this day. He also shared with me how much more he still has to learn and how much he looks forward to doing that learning.

This is a shining example of why we need to establish this day as a territorial statutory holiday. Every Yukoner should be supported to learn, like that kind man who approached me, what this day means for Yukoners. To support Yukoners to learn and heal in the ways that they need, this government must also devote real funding and resources to Yukoners on top of establishing this day as a holiday. From programming to educational tools, these supports are a critical part of reconciliation.

I remember when attending school in Old Crow in the early grades, elders came into the school on a regular basis to share with us their experiences of being taken away from their family and community to attend residential school. They taught us at that young age to appreciate our privilege of being able to stay and attend school in our very own community close to our families and connected to our culture. Even today, we continue to work at how to share these stories to help our children understand where our people have come from, what they have been through, and the strengths and pride we have gained from those experiences.

Historically, funding to communities and Yukon First Nations has been conditional, with government dictating when and how money is spent. Government must work with and listen to communities and Yukon First Nations so that they are able to lead what they want to use these resources for. The support will look different for each respective community, as every community is at a different place in grappling with and talking about the residential school system. Each community has been impacted differently by this legacy and will have their own way of honouring this day as a community.

I hope that every member of this House votes in favour of this bill in honour of past and future children. We have a collective responsibility toward reconciliation. This is especially true as representatives of our communities.

I would like to close by sharing a moment from September 30 of this year. As we gathered at the Choooutla residential school site, young children ran with freedom, playing and laughing on the hills around us. This is the future I imagine for all Yukon children: a future where the past is known, acknowledged, and passed down; a future where our children are included in the conversation of healing, where they are encouraged to learn about their families and the legacy of colonization; a future where children feel safe to play and grow freely while surrounded by family and community; and most importantly, a future where every child matters and the rights of all children will be upheld by all levels of government.

Mahsi' cho.

Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to rise at second reading of this bill and thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing it forward. We support the calls to action identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That includes recommendation 80, which calls for the establishment of a statutory holiday for a national day for truth and reconciliation to honour the survivors, their families, and communities and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

That being said, we do have concerns about the imposition of yet another statutory holiday, as we know that it strongly impacts small- and medium-sized businesses. It also creates significant costs for government as well. As such, while we support the creation of a stat holiday as per the call to action from the TRC, our position is that another stat holiday should be removed to ensure that there is no undue impact on the business community. This removal should be done after public consultation with Yukoners.

I would like to thank the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this forward. We will support the bill at second reading and look forward to hearing more about the possibility of further consultation at debate during Committee.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today and want to acknowledge the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council, as well as the traditional territories of all of our Yukon First Nations that make up this beautiful territory.

I am happy to rise to speak to this important bill where September 30 of each year here in Yukon would be known as "National Day of Truth and Reconciliation" and observed as a holiday.

Residential schools are part of Canada's shared history, and we acknowledge the impact that this has had on Yukon First Nations and all First Nations across Canada.

I want to start by just talking a little bit about some of the views of Murray Sinclair. I share Murray Sinclair's view that the path to reconciliation is through education, and all Yukoners benefit from opportunities to learn about Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being.

The Department of Education's role in truth and reconciliation is vital, and we are taking this responsibility seriously as we stand as allies to support truth and reconciliation initiatives across the Yukon schools and their communities on the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation and every day, Mr. Speaker. The department's work to address the calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission includes establishing a more inclusive public education system in Yukon, ensuring that schools meet the needs of Yukon First Nation students, and offering all students opportunities to learn about Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being and especially, Mr. Speaker, to learn about the real history — the true history.

September 26 to 30 was Truth and Reconciliation Week. Schools across the territory and central administration organized activities for staff, students, and families to honour this year's theme, "Remembering the Children" — every child matters.

I had a chance to speak with Chief Doris Bill at the Kwanlin Dün First Nation — and several other chiefs, but I was particularly taken by the work that Chief Bill did — that work to visit as many schools as she could to be part of reconciliation week and to share with students a real perspective of our shared history. She said to me that this was a really positive move, to talk in a real way to students and show them and help them to feel what is needed in our territory and country for reconciliation.

The Government of Yukon observes September 30 as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Day, also known as "Orange Shirt Day". This holiday is an important day to honour the survivors and families of communities impacted by residential schools in Canada and the continued trauma faced by indigenous communities throughout the country. I have spent a lot of time, in my working career, supporting survivors. I remember the earliest times when it was difficult to sit and listen to stories.

I always reflect on Andy Nieman and hearing him, at a young age, talk about his experience and his life story and how it started and how he moved through that traumatic experience into a place of healing — an ability to move his life forward. I always reflect on that. One of the things he said was that you need to have hope. We need to have hope, and without it, we are not going to be able to overcome the impacts that residential schools have had on us. He really inspired me to be brave and to work in a real way with survivors of residential schools. I did

just that and really learned and gained a deep understanding of how we got here, why we got to where we are, and I certainly followed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and listened to a lot of stories throughout that time.

I know that to really, truly understand — and, to be honest, when this was first proposed, being an indigenous person myself, I really thought long and hard about the two days — the June 21 or September 30. I thought really long and hard about that, because I felt that we needed a day where we really celebrate our culture and our heritage, who we are as indigenous people, and how Canadians and Yukoners can be part of that celebration and see the value in our culture. I really struggled with having another day that was focused around reconciliation and having September 30 identified as that day.

I continued to really grapple with that, and then Kamloops happened. The discovery of bodies in graves shook not only our country but me to my core. I had just been appointed as the Minister of Education, and it wasn't lost on me that, somewhere along the way, someone made a decision who was in a position much like mine to create policies that would seek to rid the Indian in the child and to work with churches and with religious organizations to do just that. So, it absolutely shook me to my core, and I think it did for everyone else throughout Canada.

I think that everyone could really see and feel what we as indigenous people experience. I mean, if you're a parent of a child, I think it hit really hard for everyone, and people felt — they just felt — what indigenous people in this country have experienced. So, I have landed on that this should be a holiday, but a holiday that's reflective. Really, our approach in our public schools has been to make it a week-long event so that they are really experiencing — and it's not just about that one day but it's about every day. I think that has really started in an organic way and will continue to build and we're going to see more from this.

I wanted to reflect on other areas of education because I think they are important — some of the actions that we've taken. We took action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action 62, which calls upon government to establish positions at the assistant deputy minister level, or higher, dedicated to indigenous content in education. In 2019, the Department of Education worked with the Chiefs Committee on Education to establish this position. The First Nation Initiative branch continues to foster effective partnerships with Yukon First Nations to support Yukon-wide and community-specific joint education priorities.

The First Nation Initiative branch has responsibilities related to First Nation education in Yukon schools: Yukon First Nation language programming in Yukon schools; development of curriculum and resource materials and training; and developing partnerships with Yukon First Nation governments and organizations.

Establishing the First Nation School Board is a major step in advancing reconciliation, a path that started 49 years ago with the historic document championed by Yukon First Nation chiefs, *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. The First Nation School Board now governs eight schools across the Yukon. The establishment of the First Nation School Board is

a historic step in advancing reconciliation and improving the educational outcomes for all students across the territory.

Recently, candidates were elected to the First Nation School Board. I again want to congratulate Shadelle Chambers, Erin Pauls, Dana Tizya-Tramm, Jocelyn Joe-Strack, and Gillian Staveley on being elected to the First Nation School Board, the first of its kind in our territory. Our government is committed to supporting the long-term success of this board.

We also have education agreements with First Nation governments which enable cooperation around implementation of shared education priorities. An example that I would like to highlight is our work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to implement its section 17.7 of the self-government agreement provisions with respect to education in a way that does not require the First Nation to draw down education, but that provides meaningful authority through a shared responsibility for the design, delivery, and administration of education programs within their traditional territory.

In addition, we have transfer payment agreements with each First Nation government. These funding agreements improve educational outcomes for their citizens and learners on their traditional territories at local schools. The Government of Yukon allocated \$1.5 million for First Nations to use their joint education priorities at the educational level, and we're working to renew agreements that expire in 2022. This community-level collaboration reflects our government-to-government relationships and commitment to reconciliation. It also reflects our commitment to working closely with Yukon First Nations to support First Nation students and respond to the recommendations from the 2019 audit and priorities under the joint education action plan.

I would like to talk a little bit about language and culture. We are very committed to supporting the revitalization of Yukon First Nation languages through language learning programs. We continue to work closely with the Yukon Native Language Centre and the Council of Yukon First Nations on programs that promote First Nation language learning, as well as supporting and revitalizing of Yukon First Nation languages.

The Government of Yukon provides the Yukon Native Language Centre with approximately almost \$1.2 million each year, part of which is to support planning for more First Nation language teacher training.

We continue to offer First Nation language programs in Yukon schools, although there are a few language teacher vacancies due to declining numbers in fluent or proficient language teachers. To support the revitalizing of Yukon First Nation languages and restoring First Nation responsibility for their languages, the Government of Yukon transferred full authority and control of the Native Language Centre to the Council of Yukon First Nations in 2018.

I also want to highlight quickly the project that is undertaken by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and their language revitalization. This is a very important initiative that is showing a lot of promise in terms of creating proficient language and revitalizing the Southern Tutchone language in their nation and throughout.

I had the opportunity to participate in the potlatch that was held to mark the First Nation School Board undertaking the governance of the St. Elias school, and at that gathering, we were able to witness young children speaking proficiently in their language and telling a story by call and echo. It was very moving to see that, and I think it shows what the First Nation School Board initiatives — and what we will do within our authority under other public schools — will learn from and work with them to ensure that we're taking the learning that's happening with the First Nation School Board and applying it as we bridge world views and work toward indigenization of our education system.

I want to talk a little bit about the audit response, because I think there are a lot of aspects within this that relate to really addressing and working around truth and reconciliation. We are unwavering in our commitment to implement all of the recommendations contained in the 2019 Auditor General's report — work toward addressing shortfalls and outcomes for First Nations and rural students. The department is advancing work on the recommendations of the 2019 audit and is making significant system changes that are putting the conditions for success in place for all Yukon learners to recover and thrive as we look beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

While we have made significant strides in some areas, we know we still have much work to do to reach our vision for a renewed, inclusive education system that better supports all students to succeed. We have made progress in several initiatives which are supporting better outcomes for students: launching the universal childcare model, including engaging with Yukon First Nations, and the early learning and the childcare community, on a government-to-government basis to inform program and policy; and professional development and curriculum for early learning programs in rural communities, including early kindergarten programs.

We are continuing to provide financial investments and cultural enhancement funding for the development of culturally rich early learning programs and environments. We are directing funding toward supporting training and development for early learning childcare workers, including collaborating with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate on offering First Nation-developed early learning child care courses. We're launching enhanced early learning kindergarten and full-day kindergarten in rural communities.

As I have already mentioned, we're working with the Chiefs Committee on Education to establish the First Nation School Board. We continue to collaborate with First Nations to implement actions that support the priorities of the joint education action plan for 2014 to 2024. The four pillars of the joint education action plan are: K to 12 culture and language; authority, control and responsibility; sustainability, supports and success; and closing the academic achievement gap. We are completing the review on inclusive and special education, advancing and reimagining inclusive and special education, the data-sharing MOU — we're working toward finalizing the student outcome strategy and working toward implementing that.

Again, there's a lot to share on reimagining special and inclusive education, which we refer to commonly as "RISE". We are building a new school in Burwash Landing, Kêts'ádañ Kù — meaning "house of learning". I am very excited about this project. I would have liked to talk a little bit more — but I am running out of time — about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls — a huge area of focus for me as a minister — and four pathways that will lead us to a different outcome by changing the story. I will hopefully have a chance to speak to some of that at another time.

Our enduring priority, since the beginning of taking on this important responsibility, has been to renew our relationships with Yukon First Nations. I think that we have created a real path to do that work in a meaningful way. I remain committed as Minister of Education and Women and Gender Equity Directorate to continue that work. Thank you for bringing forward this bill.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon, we are discussing Bill No. 305, *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, which stems from the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is one of the calls to action, No. 80 on the list.

On June 2, 2015, that committee wrapped up six years of hearings that gathered testimony from more than 6,000 residential school survivors and their loved ones. It included 94 calls to action to redress the genocide enacted on indigenous people in Canada.

This is not ancient history. The last residential school closed the year that my youngest son was born, 1996, which is 26 years ago. The horrors of this near past are still very real. They reverberate and disrupt our society in many ways, some glaringly obvious and some devilishly subtle.

This is not an indigenous problem; this is a Canadian problem and one we must all confront and reflect on. This is not easy for most Canadians, and it shouldn't be. It cuts against our national image of Canada as a culturally mosaic society, inclusive and varied, made up of decent, kind, and kind of boring folks — good neighbours and peacekeepers in the world. Generally, we are. Now, however, we have acquired another trait, which is a difficult one to confront: people who, through their institutions of government and religions, the very foundations of our society, tried to erase a huge swath of the nation's oldest cultures, languages, and people from our collective mosaic.

There are those who are going to bristle at that characterization. "That wasn't me", they'll say — some obstinately, some with horror at the assertion. Unfortunately, it was — perhaps not actively, although sometimes it was, but we all knew that something bad was happening. We knew, and we did nothing. Most of us — almost all of us — did nothing — did not act, did not care, did not seek information, did not read or listen when the information in our midst for more than a century presented itself. We did not act when we knew. We made choices; we chose to focus on other matters, and when did we know? That is a good question.

We could go back generations, and we probably should, but I will focus on my generation. A good day to consider might

have been July 22, 1990, when Elijah Harper raised an eagle feather in the Manitoba Legislature, ending the Meech Lake Accord. Another might be July 11, 1990, when members of Mohawk communities of Kanasatake, Akwesasne, and Kahnawake barricaded the Mercier bridge to dispute the expansion of a golf course in Oka, Québec. The golf course had received permission to expand nine holes onto disputed lands. No environmental or historic analysis had been done, and the Mohawk Nation was not consulted. The Oka crisis lasted 77 days and resulted in two deaths.

If you don't like either of those dates, there are others. Perhaps this milestone: November 1996. That was the date when the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples ended its \$60-million investigation of the relationship between First Nations and the Government of Canada and indeed the culture of Canada as a whole. The report was also dropped the year the last residential school closed in Canada. That last residential school was located in Saskatchewan, and that ended a 120-year effort to assimilate the oldest societies into Canadian society. In total, 150,000 children attended these schools, separated from their families, culture, language, and traditions, and the trauma of that attempt at assimilation will be with us for generations to come.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was a pre-Internet document. I remember when the document was released. I was a reporter. It was not available to me the day it was released. Boxes of the multi-volume document had to be flown to the territory because it was 4,000 pages long. I hadn't read it. I hadn't even seen it yet. Those were, as I said, pre-Internet days. Nevertheless, that night, I was contacted and interviewed by an international radio program which sought my thoughts on the document as a reporter in a, at that time, relatively remote northern town.

That night, the host asked me to answer for my nation's deplorable treatment of aboriginal people. It was, I can tell you, an uncomfortable interview. I imagined this World Service interview beamed to rooms around the world. "Why do you treat indigenous people in such a deplorable fashion?", the host asked me — or that is my memory of that interview. I've reflected on that night over the years many times. I've reflected on the question. I've reflected on my wholly anemic response — so totally lame, I banished it from my mind. I was embarrassed and ashamed for my country that night and also for myself. The world knew, and we knew. In the 20 years after the royal commission issued its 4,000-page exhaustive report, what happened?

Well, in March 2016, during a CBC interview following up on the progress of the commission recommendations, in the intervening 20-year period, Paul Chartrand, one of the report commissioners, acknowledged not much had changed. We knew; we did little; we made choices; we chose to focus on other matters, to continue business as usual.

Then came the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission's mandate was to inform all Canadians about what happened in residential schools and lay the groundwork for reconciliation. Its work began in 2008 but took concrete shape in 2009. Its first national event was in

June 2010, at The Forks National Historic Site in Winnipeg. On June 2, 2015, the commission wrapped up six years of hearings and seven national events that had gathered testimony from more than 6,000 residential school survivors and their loved ones. The final report is contained in six volumes.

The commission also created a record of the residential school system that includes more than five million documents from the Government of Canada.

That record is kept at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba. Finally, the commission released 94 calls to action to address the genocide enacted on indigenous people in Canada. The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is, as I mentioned earlier, No. 80 on the list. I have directed the Department of Community Services to draft legislation formally making that day a formal commemoration. That work is underway. It is going through the well-established drafting process within the Yukon government. It is slated for introduction in the spring legislative session, giving lots of time to plan for its formal launch in the fall. This information is public.

I have told the Legislature this and I have told my crack caucus this, so I'm a little surprised to see the bill on the floor of the Legislative Assembly today. To me, it is unfortunate that drafting resources were focused on an area that the civil service has already started to work diligently on.

The civil service has also done significant consultation. Consultation on this legislation, I believe, is pulled on in its drafting, so I hope that credit is given for the work the government has done on this important step toward reconciliation. As I have noted, the bill was in the process and slated for tabling this spring.

I also note that it is surprising that the NDP caucus spent precious time working on this item when they could have come forward with other items that they have been pressing us on publicly or time that they could have used refining and finishing work on the half-completed oil and gas bill consultation, which failed because that wasn't done. Here we are.

As you have no doubt concluded by my earlier remarks, this is an important item for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is No. 80 on the calls to action. Calls to action are critically important to this government. This is a subject important to me personally, and we will be supporting the bill today.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. Blake: The Minister of Community Services should not be surprised. Reconciliation is at the heart of what I do, both in this role and across my lifetime. The colonial legacy of the systems that I spoke about will always impact indigenous people. It will always be a thread through generations, which is why it is so important to acknowledge the truth of this history.

I would like to close by reading the works of Jacqueline Oker. Her poem hangs in our office, and I walk by it daily, as it sits directly across from my office space. It's a

reminder of what we lost and how much work lies ahead of us to heal.

Remember.
 It was not long ago
 I was jailed in a residential school
 for a crime I did not commit.
 The black-robe guards they beat the sun dance,
 chicken dance,
 jingle dance,
 fancy dance
 and hoop dance
 out of me.
 These dances are evil, they yelled.
 The sacred language they whipped out of me.
 Speak this instead,
 they ordered.
 Confused and terrified,
 I surrendered my tongue.
 Brainwashed to take commands like a dog
 I did not know who I was
 when released from prison
 many moons later.
 Squat over there on your land
 if you can't make anything of yourself,
 they said.
 Crouching on Mother Earth,
 I faintly recalled the dreamer's songs,
 and dances,
 the legend of the spider,
 the hunting ways of my people.
 I could not fully connect.
 I was alone.
 One day while sitting with an elder,
 trying to talk,
 the black-robe people arrived.
 Speak your language,
 tell the legends,
 sing your songs,
 dance your dances,
 record this for future generations.
 How could I?
 I replied.
 You pounded these sinful ways out of me.
 Remember?

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. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, has now received second reading and, pursuant to Standing Order 57(4), stands ordered for consideration by Committee of the Whole, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), the Third Party designated Bill No. 305 as an item of business today.

The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is therefore entitled to decide whether the House should resolve into Committee of the Whole for the purpose of continuing consideration of Bill No. 305. I would ask the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin to indicate whether she wishes the House to resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the House now resolve into Committee of the Whole for the purpose of continuing consideration of Bill No. 305.

Speaker: Pursuant to the request of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, I shall now leave the Chair and the House shall resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 305: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*.

Is there any general debate?

Ms. Blake: I am hopeful that my opening remarks answered some of the questions that the members may have regarding this bill. In addition, we have briefed the minister and Cabinet staff on this bill in order for them to prepare for this debate.

Similar to my colleague, the Leader of the Yukon NDP, I will be answering questions without a public servant's support in the House. Instead, I will be answering questions with the support of my caucus staff, so please bear this in mind as I work with them to provide the most accurate information. I look forward to answering any questions that members may have.

Mahsi'.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It's great to be here this afternoon. I haven't had the opportunity in this Chamber yet to ask questions on a bill in Committee, so this is an exciting time. It is a great bill to be discussing this afternoon because, as we have determined in second reading speeches, this is important for all of us. I look forward to having this discussion about this important piece of legislation this afternoon, and I look forward to hearing what the Yukon Party has to say about this piece of legislation as it susses out its questions.

I am going to begin — I really want to understand this a little more clearly. As we know, the civil service is currently working on a bill to be introduced this spring on this very subject. It's a mirror bill, really — a twin bill. Work is underway on that, drafting instructions, and all the work is being done. With that being on the spring legislative agenda for 2023, I would like to explore why the member opposite has decided to go forward and bring this bill forward this week — today.

Ms. Blake: With regard to the question about why bring this bill forward now — I think, for myself, it is important to acknowledge that this bill is important not only for me but for my community, my family, and for all First Nation people across the Yukon Territory and Canada.

I know that in the fall of this year, I received e-mails from Northwest Territories — from citizens on that side of the border — asking why TRC was not a holiday here in the territory.

So, I think that's something that I kept in mind with bringing this forward. I know that there are other First Nation people across Canada paying attention to what we do in the House as legislators. I feel this is important for all people.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair.

There's no doubt that this is important legislation. It truly is, and it's certainly a shared sentiment inside this House. There's a shared commitment to bring this legislation forward. I certainly appreciate that it is important to the member opposite, her family, her community, this territory, and indigenous people across the country. It is certainly a commitment of ours to make sure that we implement the calls

to action in this territory. It's a commitment of this government, and we certainly share it, which is why we're proceeding with this bill.

But we do have a duplication of work going on that was well-documented in public. So, again, I just want a little bit of clarity about why it had to be done this fall. Why does it have to be done this fall?

Ms. Blake: So, in the fall, the Yukon NDP signalled that the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation should be made a stat holiday on September 30 — September 29. The Liberals then endorsed what we called for in their own release a few days later, so I look forward to the government's support since we both agreed that this is important for the territory. We all know that this government may not be in place this spring, which means that we cannot ensure that this bill will be passed in time for next year — for truth and reconciliation day in Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for that answer.

I'm just trying to suss out the decision-making process a little bit further. Were any other bills considered for being brought forward this fall?

Ms. Blake: I don't see how that question is relevant to this bill, so I'm not going to answer that question.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am just trying to understand the priorities here for the NDP caucus. I beg the indulgence of the House this afternoon. The New Democratic Party has expressed an interest in housing. Housing is the number one priority we have heard from the New Democratic caucus, and yet it has not introduced any amendments to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, so I'm just wondering why this legislation came ahead of that legislation and that legislative change.

Ms. Blake: I think it's important to say that we are not members of the minister's caucus and, for us, we have prioritized this TRC call to action, and that's why we brought it forward.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for that answer. Deputy Chair, just to follow this one step further, the New Democratic caucus has also expressed a desire to offer cancer presumption to wildland firefighters. We disagree on this; that's fairly clear. There is no evidence to support a presumption for wildland crews, and it would dramatically increase rates to many businesses, including Air North. It might actually result in PPE issues and stuff. So, there is a discrepancy here.

Again, why not introduce an amendment to the WCB act instead of this? I'm just trying to help understand the decision-making process.

Ms. Blake: Again, the minister is not directing the NDP's decision.

Does he have any questions directly related to Bill No. 305?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: All right. We will move on to another subject. On the bill itself, again, who was consulted in the drafting of this bill, this piece of legislation?

Ms. Blake: I consulted by reaching out to all Yukon First Nations. Yukoners and the private sector have also already

been consulted by this government through their “what we heard” document, which showed overwhelming support for this bill. It also showed us how much more education and resources are needed to teach all Yukoners about our shared history and to honour survivors and children who did not get to come home.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In the engagement that the members opposite conducted, what did you hear about how people want to see this date commemorated?

Ms. Blake: I would encourage the minister to reference his own document, the “what we heard” document for national truth and reconciliation, which ran from March 8 to April 30. In that document, he will find the answers of how Yukoners wanted to see this day spent.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Of course, I am very familiar with the “what we heard” document that the Government of Yukon conducted and the thorough consultation. We take pride in the thorough consultations we do in the Government of Yukon. We know that sometimes those consultations have come under scrutiny and criticism, actually, by members opposite. Just recently, a bill, the animal protection act, was criticized as not going far enough, so here we have consultation conducted by the Government of Yukon that’s now being used as a cornerstone for the members opposite’s legislation.

I think there is a discrepancy there in the grade they would be giving the consultations done by the Yukon government. I will leave that for a moment, though. What I would really like to know is the consultations that the members opposite did on this bill. They said they talked to First Nations. I just want to hear what they had to say — the First Nations they consulted — what did they hear?

Ms. Blake: We read through the government’s own consultation, which surveyed 1,294 Yukoners, and we also reached out to First Nation leadership, including the Council of Yukon First Nations. We have tabled a total of seven letters to date, and I think to end — I am wondering how many letters from this government have been tabled in support of the animal protection act.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: All right, so we have ascertained — I am just going to explore the consultation done by the New Democratic caucus on this bill, just going forward. It is important because we saw, with the amendments to the *Education Act* recently, that they didn’t fully consult with the Catholic society because they did not agree with the amendment. They also brought in the *Oil and Gas Act*, and they got letters from some First Nations but not all, and we were quite clear that we needed support from all First Nations before that went forward. And now we have another act, and I am heartened to hear the support and how much they have leaned into the consultation — the Yukon government did — the civil service — because they really take that work seriously and do a phenomenal job, but I am still trying to ascertain how much consultation the New Democratic caucus did prior to bringing this bill forward, on its own, to determine some of the supporting documentation and some of the, perhaps, problems that may be intrinsic with this piece of legislation.

So, did they talk to the Chamber of Commerce or any business leaders about this legislation prior to bringing it to the House?

Ms. Blake: I think it’s important to note that we disagree with the minister’s assumptions — assertions, sorry. Again, how many letters of support from Yukon First Nations did the government get in support of the animal protection act? I think it’s important to say that, as an indigenous woman bringing this bill forward, it’s not only important to me for selfish reasons. I think about how I was raised; I think about the impacts I grew up with, as the daughter of a residential school survivor. I think about the harms committed against our children within the homes when we grew up in those environments. I think about my experiences in society when I’m accessing programs and services that don’t work for our people. I think about the challenges I’ve gone through, not only in my life as a homeless youth, but also struggling with addictions and mental health and how these systems fail to respond in a respectful, culturally understanding way to understand why I was the way I was and why I see so many of our people across Canada struggling, and a lot of the impacts we see in indigenous community are a direct link — or a direct result — of residential schools, colonization, segregation, separation from our land, separation from our families, separation from our culture, our language, and everything that makes us who we are as indigenous people.

If this residential school system was not so damaging, why do I struggle to speak the Gwich’in language? I could understand it when it’s spoken, but I can’t speak it. I could read it, and I could understand it. Why do my kids not know the Gwich’in language? Why are my kids not connected to their grandmother? Why is our family so separated? And again, when you think about the answers to those questions, think about the impacts of residential school and everything that was put in place by governments to destroy who we are as indigenous people in this country. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to ask the member opposite: How many other jurisdictions in Canada have recognized this day in legislation currently?

Ms. Blake: The jurisdictions that recognize national truth and reconciliation day include the federal government, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, and Prince Edward Island.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: On a technical matter, is the holiday, or day of commemoration, being posited in this piece of legislation being handled in the same way as Remembrance Day? That is, if the holiday falls on a weekend, it does not result in a statutory on the Monday? Or is it like Christmas, where the Monday would be the holiday?

Ms. Blake: With National Truth and Reconciliation Day, it would be celebrated, honoured, and upheld on September 30 of every year, no matter what day of the week it falls on.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Now, recently, just this afternoon, the member opposite said that the NDP would be happy to swap out another colonial holiday in favour of this one. Can the member please tell the House which colonial holiday they are considering swapping out?

Ms. Blake: My response to the question would be that we expect the government to consult on this issue, but I would say that any colonial holiday that we celebrate in the territory right now, which includes Discovery Day or Victoria Day — or the minister could look across the country and see what other jurisdictions have done to switch out the holiday for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as well.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the answer. That said, while there were some suggestions made, it doesn't seem to be a specific holiday that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has on the chopping block at the moment.

Do you have a process through which you will decide how to choose this through the NDP caucus examining this process to come up with a holiday to delete from the list in the Yukon?

Ms. Blake: I think it's important to note that the minister is in government, and this work to decide which statutory holiday that we would swap out for national truth and reconciliation day — that work lies with the government.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is the New Democratic caucus' bill, and it was their idea to suggest that a holiday be withdrawn from the roster. It hasn't been something that we have floated on this side of the House.

I'm just trying to understand the process by which the New Democrat caucus would come up with a holiday to remove from the public calendar, and I'm just trying to understand that and what kind of consultation process they would undertake to determine that.

Ms. Blake: I'm just going to quote from the "what we heard" document that's from the government: "Many respondents recommended replacing a current general holiday. The most frequent suggestions were statutory days with colonialist or religious origins, like Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day or Discovery Day." In terms of the question about consultation, I would say that when the NDP forms government, we will be happy to issue a survey to figure out which stat holiday Yukoners would want to give up for the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That was an interesting response. So, my final question this afternoon — I was going to ask about timelines for any potential consultations. I'm now anxious to hear what those timelines are, in light of the answer I just received. Then I will certainly cede the floor, I think, at that point, and I would like to hear what the Yukon Party caucus has to say about the bill before us this afternoon.

Ms. Blake: I think that there is plenty of time for the minister's department — a very capable department — to consult ahead of next year's truth and reconciliation day to figure out the timelines and let us know what they come up with as government.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Deputy Chair. The member has answered all of our questions.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further debate on Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*?

Seeing none, we will proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Preamble

Preamble agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Ms. Blake: I move that you report Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin that the Chair report Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Ms. Blake: Deputy Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Unanimous consent re moving third reading of Bill No. 305

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 55(1), to move third reading on Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, at this time.

Speaker: The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has requested the unanimous consent of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 55(1), to move third reading on Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, at this time.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Bill No. 305: *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 305, standing in the name of Ms. Blake.

Ms. Blake: I move that Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin that Bill No. 305, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Ms. Blake: I thank my colleagues for their questions and comments during Committee of the Whole. As I shared earlier, passing the *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act* is much more than the day off. It's a way to give every Yukoner the space, the support, and the community to honour everything that this day signifies.

This statutory holiday will look different for every Yukoner. Some may spend time alone to grieve everything that is the colonial legacy of past and present governments. Some will take their family out on the land to pass down teachings to children and grandchildren, in spite of the government's efforts to destroy that knowledge. Some might head out to a gathering in their community to mourn and celebrate together with neighbours and family. It is up to this House to make it possible for every Yukoner to spend this day in whatever way works best for them.

National truth and reconciliation day is one step of many to right the wrongs of colonization and truly act on reconciliation, and today, we, as leaders and representatives of our communities, have the opportunity to push truth and reconciliation one step forward. I am very much looking forward to my colleagues supporting this bill. Mahsi'.

Mr. Dixon: As I referred to at second reading, we support the call to action in the TRC. We do have concerns about the impact an additional stat holiday will have on the private sector and look forward to the consultation that will be hosted by the Government of Yukon with regard to removing a stat holiday commensurate with the imposition of this stat holiday.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: To begin with, I am really honoured to rise to speak at third reading to this bill. I want to begin by thanking the NDP for bringing this bill forward. We agree, and we think this is an important thing to do. I try to always learn that it's not important where these good ideas come from; it's important that they come forward. It is good to be here today, and I, for one, am hopeful that we are unanimous in this House. I, for one, will be honoured to have been part of the Legislative Assembly that brought this forward. I acknowledge the NDP for their work and their decision to bring it forward.

A similar thing happened when we first came into government. We were elected in 2016, and in 2017, I think, the first act that we brought forward was for National Aboriginal Day on June 21. I acknowledged at that time that it was my

predecessor, Kevin Barr, who had advocated to bring that forward. I was happy that we were able to support that work that he had begun. It really is about trying to get this in place for Yukoners and to right wrongs. I think that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is correct: That is the important thing that we need to hear.

I want to make a few comments because this is my first time rising on the bill to speak in support of it. One of the things I want to say is that we, the Liberal government, don't think — the "what we heard" did, of course, acknowledge lots of different views, and we always report on those range of views, but there's always a diverse set of views. The NDP and the Yukon Party have both suggested that we drop another holiday, for example, that we drop Easter, or Victoria Day, or Discovery Day. I don't think we should be doing that. Even though there were some Yukoners who suggested that, I don't think that is a good idea. It was not our intention from the "what we heard". That wasn't the leading suggestion that we drew; it was just noted.

I think that it is important that we — the Member for Whitehorse West, in Committee of the Whole, was asking questions to try to ascertain what level of engagement had taken place. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin seemed to be concerned with those questions, but they are just us trying to ask how the level of engagement went — that's all.

Luckily, because we did do engagement — it was always the intention to get here, and we did a survey, and we asked Yukoners what they thought. We did get that back from Yukoners, and we saw that Yukoners are supportive of this holiday, and there are a couple of important things that I think are worth noting from that.

In our mandate letters, one of the top priorities that is listed there, and which the Premier tasked us with, is to build strong working relationships with First Nations. We are working with First Nations to address the harms caused by a very long history of inequality and discrimination and to try to achieve meaningful change and real benefits for all Yukoners through a range of initiatives. They are economic, social, and environmental — they are across the board.

I say "all Yukoners" because it is really our belief that righting these wrongs is not just for First Nations; it's for all of us. It is an improvement for all of us. This holiday that we are talking about — and the word "holiday" is a little bit difficult for me. It's a time to commemorate, to acknowledge, to learn, to consider, to reflect, to reconcile — I hope — because it is not about fun or time off. It's about these important things.

That's why, for me, this day will stand alongside Remembrance Day in my mind. We just had Remembrance Day here, and all of us talk about trying to commemorate, to learn, and to think about war and peace and sacrifice. We wear a poppy over our hearts to think about that. In the same way, I love the beaded orange shirts that we wear on September 30. It's an important thing. I think this day is important, and that is one of the things we heard when we engaged.

You know, the member opposite, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, talked about their press release that came out at the end of September, just ahead of Truth and Reconciliation Day,

but of course, we had been doing that engagement over the summer, and I think we published the “what we heard” in early September. So, in this way, I think we are all on the same path.

There was one thing during Committee of the Whole where the Member for Whitehorse West asked a question about whether the date would be the day, and I think what we are passing today — or what is in this act — the way I read it, as it is written, is that it will create a holiday on the Monday. That’s how it’s written in there. That’s what I think it is. Now, the day of truth and reconciliation will be September 30, but how it’s there in the *Interpretation Act* and the *Employment Standards Act*, in the way that I see the legislation written, actually indicates that, if truth and reconciliation day on September 30 happens to fall on a Sunday, then it will create a Monday holiday. I think that is an important question — more important, from my perspective, than trying to remove another holiday.

When we went out and talked to Yukoners, you know, there were some early questions about whether we would do it instead of a National Aboriginal Day. Clearly, what we felt and what we heard was no, no, no — that was a day to mark in recognition and celebration of the culture of First Nations, and truth and reconciliation day — quite distinct — is to reflect on the past harms and how we can change and should change as a society.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, nothing I see in the bill directs government to examine some other holiday that should not be observed. That isn’t what we have in front of us. What we are supportive of is adding truth and reconciliation day. All that said, I just really want to take a moment to, again, say thank you for the opportunity to work alongside all of the other members of this House and, in particular, to thank the NDP for bringing this forward.

I will, later on in life, consider this day as an important day for the Yukon, and I look forward to us all supporting this important new day of recognition.

Ms. White: I thank my colleagues for their words so far. I think that they are really important. I also appreciate the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes’ remarks, because it was my colleague, Kevin Barr — and it was at his urging that we started working on an Aboriginal Peoples Day as a statutory holiday, and it was the work of our caucus at the time. I think that it is really important that we note that we are at different times than we were when I first was elected in 2011 — and for that, I am grateful. The fact that we have had this conversation today, in the way that we have, and we are moving forward — I am grateful.

I think about my colleague for Vuntut Gwitchin, and I think about when I initially approached her about running with me in the territorial election and how important her voice and her experiences are to me, as an individual, but also to the leader of a political party. So, when she highlighted that this was really important for her — this is important for me; it is important for Yukoners. Like the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said, I will remember this day as one of those shining moments.

We have had, I would say, possibly more than many in this Chamber when we have come together about really important issues and moved the bar. I think that this is another example of how, in Yukon, we can lead, and we can put aside those differences and we can find those commonalities and we can focus on it. I am grateful for my colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, for trusting not only me, but our colleagues, and the people around us, to help get us here, because it has been a really important time, and I am grateful for the work that was done before.

I think about the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the thousands and thousands of stories they heard that got us to those recommendations. I think that, if there was ever a time, I would think that we are not standing on the shoulders of giants, but we are standing in front of and behind those stories — that we are supporting those stories and giving — you know, hopefully breathing a little bit of life into it, and it will look different for others. I think that this is a moment — I hope that this is a moment where we can all look back and we can celebrate that we did this together, even though we came from different spots.

So, I thank my colleagues for their perspectives and the sharing that they did. Today is a really big day.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. Blake: I am so honoured to see this bill to make national truth and reconciliation day a territorial statutory holiday. Every indigenous person and every Yukoner will benefit from having this day as a stat holiday.

As I shared, this is an opportunity to reflect and also pass down information to younger generations and to teach them about our history. I think about the information that was passed down to me when I was a child. I remember sitting at the feet of elders as a little girl. I heard our elders speak about what the future of reconciliation would look like. I can feel them today, holding me up. This very moment is what they prepared me for, because they knew. They knew that, one day, I would be working on the future of reconciliation and that I would need their knowledge to hold me up. They knew the responsibility that we carried as children and would eventually carry as adults and elders, future elders of our communities.

With this bill passing, it will change the future of reconciliation in the territory. Today is an example of what not only my community prepared me for, but also the elders who I listened to, and I have been listening to elders since I was in my mum’s tummy.

I am reminded of what the late Darius Elias said when speaking about truth and reconciliation in 2015 — and I quote: “... reconciliation is a process. It is a call to action, but it is not a photo op or an afternoon of debate in the Legislature. It is not a course or an event, but it is a way of life; it is a world view. It is an acceptance of what has occurred and a resolution to look to ourselves to move together to build a more inclusive and democratic society.”

In addition to passing this bill, I am hopeful that the government will continue the process of reconciliation by providing programming and education on this important day for all Yukoners.

Mahsi' cho.

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

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. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 305 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 305 has passed this House.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 519 — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Motion No. 519, standing in the name of Mr. Istchenko; adjourned debate, Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: When last we left off, I was talking about how I had been a reporter working with Dave White — great writer — and was a music critic. A fellow named Don had been reading my stuff every week and commenting on it, and then, when I became a politician, I started dabbling lyrics into the stuff I wrote. He used to find them and call and let me know when he found them. He died a few years ago, and when he did, I stopped with the music.

Today I put it back — I think is how it went — so here we are. I'm going to put the music back. We are talking about home heating fuel.

"We're selling the territory cheap", I think, was the new lyric I hit on. So, we have to hand the Yukon Party credit this afternoon — the Yukon Party's oil slick on this issue. They are leaning on the Northwest Territories for support here. That territory implemented an exemption for heating oil. Well, for clarity, the Northwest Territories just removed that exemption. They are no longer exempting home heating fuel. It's not permitted under the federal carbon-pricing model anymore. It's gone, nixed, removed. There is no longer any heating oil exemption in the north to point to, so this motion is frankly out of date.

Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island also lost their ability to target subsidies recently. They all have to utilize the federal carbon backstop, which removes much of the agency from the provinces or territories in question and instead disperses the carbon rebates to residents of their jurisdiction directly. So, we have just seen several jurisdictions lose that ability to target fuel subsidies.

We, on this side, agree with the principle of a price on pollution, be it oil or garbage. We worked hard to tailor our subsidies to align with Ottawa's intention, and we appreciate the Yukon Party's support on our successful legislative approach as was discussed significantly when this House debated and unanimously supported our government's *Carbon Price Rebate Amendments Act*. The rebates provided to municipalities, First Nation governments, businesses, as well as individuals, is worth fighting for. Our made-in-Yukon carbon-pricing rebate system is lauded across the country. We are again leading the country on another issue, and this is the kind of system that countless Canadians want. In fact, even organizations hesitant toward carbon pricing, like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, see merit in such an approach.

Our made-in-Yukon system encourages companies to work to cut fuel consumption and make themselves more efficient. To my colleagues from the Council of the Federation who are now encountering the federal backstop, I would strongly encourage them to take a close look at the Yukon's carbon-pricing system as a model to emulate.

For those keeping track, I just want to lay this out. The Yukon Party supported a carbon price during the last election because it was popular. They then flipped to not supporting one once they got into the House. Then they flopped and voted in favour of carbon pricing just this session, which I thank them for — that's great — and now they flip back to again being against it. If you follow this, Mr. Speaker, you risk whiplash.

Of course, at this second, the Member for Kluane and the Yukon Party do not really support carbon pricing. I guess next second, next week, next month, just before the election, they will swap back again, but right now, they don't support it.

This really isn't about heating oil savings. Sure, the Yukon Party pitches themselves as championing Yukoners, but, really, this is just a bait and switch — selling the next generation off cheap to further their agenda of fracking in the Yukon,

wrecking the beautiful place we have, and selling the spoils to fuel the LNG plant that they want to build — a 50-year-or-more investment in a dirty, dying fuel. That's really what's at play this afternoon. They don't subscribe to the problem of man-made climate change. There's no problem here.

Crisis — what crisis? That's the philosophy of the Yukon Party. Type it into Google. The album art that will pop up captures the Yukon Party's approach perfectly. That's the play this afternoon.

They are selling out the territory's future, and this motion — wrapping fracking, delaying, and indeed eroding any action on climate change and anti-inflation rhetoric — is just slathering lipstick on a pig, selling the Yukon and its future generations cheap — exempt home heating fuel from the carbon tax, remove the financial incentive to improve, to adapt, to change — delay action on climate change.

Mr. Speaker, crisis — what crisis? Everything is okay.

Is it, though? Is it, though? Remarkable flooding in October, top three worst floods in June — one only has to talk to Marsh Lake, Tagish, Old Crow, Carmacks, or — dare I say it — Lake Laberge residents to hear concerns about rising waters. Then there are the landslides, atmospheric rivers, washouts, dry lightning in June, fires threatening Mayo, Keno, and Stewart Crossing, and wildfires throughout the Pacific Northwest. Mr. Speaker, the Amazon is turning to cinders. Utah's Great Salt Lake is drying up and releasing arsenic-laden winds upon three-quarters of the state's people. We are seeing heat deaths in Europe and Asia and melting permafrost, heaving roads, and sinking schools here in the territory. Siberia is burning; Antarctica is melting. This is bleak. It is hard to write, and I'm sure that it is very hard to hear, but it is easy to summarize:

Temperature rising
Climate denying
Fever is gripping
Nobody's listening

There are more lyrics. Today's play is really to remove the price on carbon. All right, so now that the goal is clear, let's raise the temperature in this Chamber a little more.

The Member for Watson Lake — recently, I heard the Yukon Party member ask, in response to a ministerial statement on flooding and fires: When will the government begin preparing for next year's flood and fire season? Think about that a second. We have had historic flooding in 2021 and 2022. People have never seen the snowpack and rains and landslides. They said it was coming; they knew it was coming. Why? Because our society's behaviours and choices are affecting the climate.

So, I am preparing for next year's flooding and fires right now, and I am also committed to changing our behaviour into the future through a price on carbon, through the Better Buildings program, putting a price on garbage and tightening rules on its disposal, promoting alternative energy, and a host of other measures.

Folks on the Yukon Party benches — they normalize the disaster on our doorstep and seek to promote and profit from

the cause. That sounds harsh — god, that sounds harsh. I wish that it weren't true, but it is.

The Yukon Party supports oil and gas development in the Yukon. They do not support the Atlin hydro project; that's clear now. They do not support a community project led by the Taku River Tlingit through their Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership. They do not support a project that would provide hydro at 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour — no.

So, what do they support? Not renewable power of 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour. From the current debate in the House, they support an expensive LNG plant that offers power in the 20-cent range and rising, a plant running on fuel that globally is increasing in price because of a war in Europe, leading to this motion to cut taxes on the fuel that they promote — fuel that would have to be trucked up the highway to the plant at great expense to the economy and the planet. They complain about renting of transitional generators for 13 years and instead want to saddle the territory with a second permanent LNG plant for the next 50 to 75 years. No problem with a permanent plant but a problem with temporary rentals that deliver power at the same price — how do you square this? I can't. Mr. Speaker, I can't.

And yet let me be clear. Despite its avowed support for oil and gas, the Yukon Party campaigned on implementing carbon pricing in the last election in 2021. Why? Mr. Speaker, fake left, deke right.

Most Yukoners do not want fracking. They do not support extending our dependence on fossil fuels. They want green energy and action on climate change. Fresh from orchestrating its whisker-thin victory over the principled Member for Lake Laberge, the Yukon Party opposition leader caught the winds of public opinion and pivoted away from the Yukon Party's far-right base, pirouetting left toward the centre. Baffled conservatives I know freely admitted that they didn't recognize their party in this play for power at any price during the election — and afterwards, his pledge to support the full confidence and supply agreement. Support for universal childcare, support for carbon pricing, support for vaccines, support for rent caps, successor legislation, what the —

Clearly, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and the Member for Kluane are among the hard-headed faction; they never received the new leader's progressive memo. Never mind, fellows; I'm positive that there were other conservatives who were left off your leader's mailing list. This side is now back to messages for the base. The progressive mask is gone. That's the trick — right? Pretend you are one thing and then, if successful, do what you really want.

What does the Yukon Party want? To exploit the Yukon's oil and gas reserves through fracking, build an LNG plant, ban green energy initiatives, and delay further action on climate change. "We are so small, we will have no impact anyway" goes the refrain.

That's the play laid bare — fake left, deke right. Today, they denied it even happened — the carbon-pricing plan — but it did, and the evidence of their support of oil development and expansion is in the Yukon Party's objection to the bill that the NDP just debated. They do not want First Nations to have a veto over oil and gas development. In fact, the Yukon Party

unilaterally revoked that veto — fake left, deke right — and that's the Yukon Party's modus operandi.

The Member for Kluane responded to the COP27 meeting saying: As we know too well, climate change is affecting us here in the Yukon at greater rates than elsewhere. It's good to hear. It matters to him because the road that runs into Alaska is slumping as the permafrost melts under it, and he wants the Yukon government to fix it — an Alaskan conduit that has been paid for by Washington until a few years ago. He wants the Yukon to pick up that tab. If we do, will Washington kick in anything? Will it pick up the slack? Think about it for a moment.

Second, in response to what is widely believed to be catastrophic climate change, the member's big pitch is to demand that we fix a road. Now, roads are important — no question. You won't find an opponent of roads here — but that's your response? Is that it? Is that the extent of your consideration? I had to get that off my chest.

Then, just moments later, after talking about COP27, asserting that the effects are worse here than anywhere else, the Yukon Party was back to pitch a fossil-fuel-powered LNG plant over the Atlin hydro project. And now here we are this afternoon talking about cutting the carbon tax that the Yukon Party supported once, depending on who they were talking to in the last election. They assert it's because they care. I counter that it is here this afternoon because they want to play to their hard-right base. They want their conservative mojo back. It is mid-season in the election cycle, and they want to win back their conservative chops before the next election when they can don their progressive mask again to pander to the juicy centre. Well, we're already there, Mr. Speaker.

I will cap this with a few questions for folks to ponder: Who pays off the debts that we're creating? Who fixes the messes that we keep making? Where is the soul, the substance, the whole, when you are living on that last frontier every day?

Don, I have crammed plenty of lyrics into this one just for you. Thank you to Jim Moginie, Rob Hirst, Peter Garrett, the late Bones Hillman, and the rest of the lads for years of listening enjoyment and for suggesting that we whisper once in a while — advice I am admittedly still working on.

I hope you are all paying attention, folks.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Istchenko: My motion read: "THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to exempt home heating fuel from the Government of Canada's carbon-pricing system." This is an important motion for Yukoners. It's about affordability. This is a discussion being had across the country in legislatures and at kitchen tables.

It's disappointing that the Liberals would rather stand up for their federal Liberals' crippling carbon tax instead of Yukoners, but that doesn't surprise me. So, Mr. Speaker, let's go to a vote.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 519 agreed to

Motion No. 498

Clerk: Motion No. 498, standing in the name of Mr. Hassard.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin:

THAT this House urges the Premier of Yukon to seek the advice of the Conflict of Interest Commission regarding whether or not the former Minister of Health and Social Services, Pauline Frost, contravened the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act* in regard to the Old Crow health and wellness centre.

Mr. Hassard: It's an honour to rise today to speak on behalf of this motion here in the Legislature.

Obviously, this is a very important subject to many Yukoners. We have heard it on numerous occasions. Unfortunately, the Minister of Health and Social Services is scoffing and doesn't feel that Yukoners care about it, but unfortunately, she is wrong again.

Anyway, we brought this question forward to the Legislature during Question Period on more than one occasion. The Premier has continually — I should note, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier is the only person in this Legislature who actually is able to ask the conflicts commissioner if, in fact, the previous Minister of Health and Social Services was in conflict.

It has been quite clear during the questioning to the Premier that he is, in fact, unwilling to ask David Jones, the conflicts commissioner, if the previous minister is in conflict. I

think that it really is quite unfortunate that the Premier has taken this approach.

As I said, many Yukoners are interested in this. They would like to get to the bottom of this. So, that is why I felt that it was important to bring this motion forward; it was because we weren't getting the answers that Yukoners deserve during Question Period or during general debate.

So, Mr. Speaker, here we are today. We have an opportunity to discuss this motion in the Legislature. I would certainly like to see this motion come to a vote. I think that, if the Legislature agrees with me that this is something that the Premier should do, then I hope that he would listen to Yukoners and listen to the word of this Legislature, even though we know that he has proven not to do that before. We had a motion on the floor to have one of the ministers in his Cabinet resign. He didn't move forward on that, so I guess this is another opportunity for him to right a wrong.

I certainly look forward to hearing what others have to say today, and I certainly look forward to getting to a vote on this particular motion.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to speak today. Despite the disparaging remarks in the opening remarks about me personally, I think that is irrelevant. There's actually quite a bit about this motion that is irrelevant. The question has been asked repeatedly in this House by many members of the Yukon Party. They clearly think it is an important one, from the focus upon which they have brought this year alone on five separate occasions. The question has been asked six times. Each time, we've answered the question, and as I've said in this House before, just because the members opposite do not like the answer to a particular question does not mean that it has not been answered.

By calling this motion, the Yukon Party is disparaging the reputation and the business decisions of Ketz Construction and tarnishing the name of the chief-elect, a strong indigenous woman for the Vuntut Gwitchin. Presumably, there are things that Yukoners wish us to be dealing with in this important House, and if I note that the member opposite, in bringing this motion, has indicated the importance of it for some of his constituents or for him — that's what he said — we urge the Yukon Party to please take it up with the corporation involved or the people involved or, as we've said on many occasions, with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

Mr. Dixon: I'll just quickly address some of the comments from the minister. Of course, as we discussed throughout the course of this Sitting, the only person who can seek this advice from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner in the Legislature is the Premier, and we're hoping, by compelling him with a motion that's passed here in the Legislature, that he'll listen to the will of the Legislature and act on that motion.

The minister continues to make comments about the company in question. Of course, that has nothing to do with the company at all. It has everything to do with the individual in question, and that's why the motion reads as it does. So, we look forward to hearing the answers to these questions, we look

forward to seeing the advice of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and we look forward to bringing this to a vote today.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to see that we will, in fact, get this motion to a vote today. It's unfortunate that we didn't hear from many members of the Legislature, but at any rate, I appreciate your time, and thank you very much.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 498 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic

Development, in Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 206: *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Economic Development — *continued*

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to first start by thanking the officials for coming in to provide support today. My deputy minister, Justin Ferbey, is here with me, as well as the assistant deputy minister, Michael Prochazka. With that, I believe we will just cede the floor to the opposition and begin the questions and debate.

Ms. Van Bibber: I will also welcome the officials this afternoon. Hopefully, we can get a couple of questions in before the end of the day.

Going back to the mandate letter that we had spoken about, the minister was asked to investigate the potential to develop a flexible field house complex not only for athletes, but for large public conferences and events. I was wondering if the minister could provide an update on this work. Is it linked to a convention centre process, or was it linked to the Canada Winter Games bid process? If you could give me an update on that; thank you.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will just give a bit of background on the beginning conversations concerning the question in front of us, and then I will share a bit about some of the due diligence that has been undertaken.

So, the original idea for this particular concept, which was a field house — a style of field house — or a large tent that is used in a lot of different areas. It is something that Softball Yukon, as a sport organization, first brought to the Yukon government. There were some earlier conversations, I believe, with the Minister of Community Services at the time, who had the obligation for sport, and I believe that those conversations would have happened in 2020-21. Then I was also engaged — there were some conversations with some of the members of Softball Yukon on this as well, and it was really focused on the fact that — is there an opportunity to build a cost-effective structure in the Yukon that could be used for multiple purposes? The purposes, of course, were sport. Could you have a soccer pitch inside? Could it be converted to be able to have, of course, softball inside? And that would give you a 12-month season.

But the reason that there was some interest, as well, is because there was the loss of what has been used as a convention centre, which was adjacent to the Coast Hotel. So, we were hearing from the Convention Bureau and the tourism sector that we needed to have something, whether it was an interim measure or another structure, where you would be able to host a large event. That event could be anywhere from — really, it is comparable to the specs that the Department of Tourism and Culture had put out around having the ability to host up to 700 people for a sit-down meal. From the subject matter experts in the tourism sector, they said that is really where we have to see things move to.

So, we began to do that tender, take that research, and using capacity from both Economic Development — individuals there — as well as Community Services, and so, I will share a little bit about that process.

We had called it “preliminary scoping and background research” that we were undertaking, and it was really around the feasibility of building a flexible field house complex for athletes and large public events. The department, looking at this — a couple of different pieces that I think that we should touch on. So, again, it would be like an inflatable dome — is kind of what they call it — to contain year-round softball and soccer. The upfront capital on it — what we had seen — was quite low. It was approximately \$8 million, but there are some other pieces.

When it was brought to us, there was information that we have since been able to bring to the table and to the conversation. There are a couple of key things. First of all, there’s very high heating needs, which is really significant when you talk about GHG emissions, especially if there is a wish to allow its use by indoor sports such as basketball and volleyball. Also, it’s a relatively short expected life for the actual structure. It’s as low as 10 to 15 years in other jurisdictions. Again, that means that it has higher capital cost over a standard building life cycle.

Also, the domes are also at risk from collapse from snow loads and a risk from falling embers from wildfires. So, these structures — the team did pretty comprehensive research on it. There was one that was built on Prince Edward Island that was associated with some organized national games. There was one in Saskatchewan, another one in northern Alberta, and one in British Columbia.

Some of the messaging that we received from folks when we sent a team to actually look at them and take a look at how they are operated — and some of the information that we received from British Columbia was that they just wouldn’t use them anymore because they have, of course, had really significant fire seasons. Because of the material that is used, which is essentially a plastic, if embers hit something like this, you are really in a difficult situation. I also believe that there were some really significant challenges with even trying to get insurance on these structures, so that was also of some concern.

An insulated fabric building structure for softball and soccer, if we had it at that size and magnitude, which were some of the initial conversations, that is about \$12 million, so \$4 million more. Construction on a standard building of this

kind would cost about \$20 million, so again, these are things that we would have to weigh.

Some of the other pieces that we're dealing with now in that conversation is, of course, the Canada Games conversation, which also came to the table. This was not connected to the Canada Games; this was really about the interests of the sport community, as well as an interim measure. The other piece of this was that, since then, we have had a real push where what we have heard from the tourism sector and from others is that this particular structure just wouldn't work as well. It wouldn't fill the appropriate need for the tourism sector, so that's why Tourism and Culture went out and did an expression of interest to gauge the interest of different parts of the sector to actually look at building out a convention centre.

So, at this time, really, we haven't made a formal call on the decision. The evidence that is in front of us really would say that it's not the right decision, and it seems as though the interest, as well, from Softball Yukon has really waned in those discussions. So, there doesn't seem to be as much of a group of champions in the community, and there are really some challenges — sorry, I'll just close with this.

The other challenge, too — the cost, when you are converting it from one sport to the other, can be as high as \$7,000 every time you switch from soccer, say, to softball. The evidence states, really, that it's probably not the best business decision to move on this particular project but to support other structures and to maybe look more toward a unique convention centre space.

Ms. Van Bibber: You mentioned there was a loss of the convention centre. We were given to understand that wasn't sold with the main hotel. So, after the COVID situation — is mainly waning now — would that not switch back to being a convention centre? Or how long is the term for rental of the building?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: You know, that's really a conversation, I think, for the ownership group. Of course, the Government of Yukon has not — you know, there are times when there is an event that's hosted, and we support those events, but I think, if that happens, it will likely be a conversation between the private sector and the potential clients they would have using that building. I'm not aware that there is still an opportunity to rent that space, but I'm not sure. I think the — again, I don't have access to those lease agreements through Health and Social Services right now. So, I think, yes, that's probably a question maybe for the Minister of Health and Social Services or with the private sector — just seeing if they still have interest in leasing that space.

What I can say is that, this weekend for Geoscience, the organizers used multiple venues: the Gold Rush Inn; the Sternwheeler — we would formerly refer to it as the "Westmark"; and the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. Not optimal, I would say, from an operational standpoint, but extremely well done, as professional-looking events as they have ever been.

Of course, Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre is such a great space. I think that the previous structure limited us. We needed a bigger space in the community even with, of course, the old

Lions pool being converted. But I believe, moving forward, we'll have to use the assets that we have in a very creative way. We're just getting ready, of course, to go out to a more significant process through Tourism and Culture around the convention centre — and then being able to understand what people are really committed to doing and then understanding where the government can support those efforts.

Ms. Van Bibber: The tourism sector, as we know, is the huge economic driver, and the last two years have not been ideal, but does the minister have any insight into the comeback of the operation of the White Pass and Yukon train into Carcross this coming season?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The conversations that have been undertaken lately with White Pass have been very positive. Deputy Minister Ferbey and I travelled to meet with the ownership group, Blackstone, which owns Carrix, and Carrix is the company that then inevitably owns White Pass now. Blackstone is a very significant company. It is the largest infrastructure company in the world. The conversations were fruitful. There were a number of things that we went to talk with them about. As you review my mandate letter, I believe — there is another line in there that talks about the potential of looking at commercial rail in Whitehorse, so that was one of the things that we went to discuss and to see if they were interested in working directly with the government on some feasibility work. They are, of course, the owner of the rail line, so we got a positive response on that and we are looking to move toward that work.

The other thing that was undertaken in those discussions — and just to clarify, the existing rail infrastructure that goes from Skagway into Whitehorse is what we were discussing. The second part of this is concerning the coming back into Carcross next year. My sense is that they were very positive. They are doing the things that are necessary to ensure that we see that traffic come back. I want to be open with the House. I am not sure yet what the volumes are going to look like. We know what the numbers were pre-COVID, but we know that they are coming back and that there has been quite a bit of money spent this year on capital investment in the rail, and that has been for everything from bridges right through to some of the rail ties that are being replaced. So, that has been a good conversation.

If anything, the focus on the Skagway port and the work around it — what I would say is that one of the ancillary benefits of that is that we have had a lot of dialogue with the folks in Skagway, which is great because you just get to understand what is happening there, where you can be doing more together. We have had at least one new business that is owned by residents of — I think, actually one resident from Pelly-Nisutlin and another individual from Whitehorse who had just opened a business there, so we were also trying to ensure that any Yukoners whom we can support to open businesses in Skagway had the opportunity to do that.

We feel positive with the rail, but I have an obligation to come back and report to the House when I have a better sense of what those numbers look like, which I absolutely will. As we start to have a deeper conversation with White Pass around the

feasibility work on the commercialization of that line and what that looks like, I will bring that back or be able to speak to it in Committee.

Deputy Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek South that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report of the Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 23, 2022:

35-1-84

2021-2022 Annual Report Yukon University and Yukon University Consolidated Financial Statements Year Ended March 31, 2022 (McLean)

The following legislative returns were tabled November 23, 2022:

35-1-70

Response to Written Question No. 23 re: Old Crow health and wellness centre and tenplex housing project (Clarke, N.)

35-1-71

Response to Written Question No. 30 re: privacy data breaches (Clarke, N.)

35-1-72

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 204, *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — government employees (Streicker)

35-1-73

Response to Written Question No. 19 re: auxiliary-on-call and casual staff (Streicker)

35-1-74

Response to Written Question No. 20 re: full-time equivalents in 2016-17 budget year (Streicker)

35-1-75

Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: Atlin hydro expansion project (Streicker)

35-1-76

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on November 17, 2022 — Yukon Utilities Board hearing (Streicker)

35-1-77

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on November 17, 2022 — electricity purchase agreement (Streicker)

The following document was filed November 23, 2022:

35-1-115

Government of Yukon response to the October 2022 report *Responding to Sexualized Abuse in Yukon Schools: Review of Policies and Governmental Response*, letter re (dated November 22, 2022) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Annette King, Yukon Child and Youth Advocate (McLean)

Written notice was given of the following motions November 23, 2022:

Motion No. 551

Re: supporting the people of Taiwan (Dixon)

Motion No. 552

Re: condemning terrorist attacks in Jerusalem (Dixon)