



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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NOTE

The 2015 Fall Sitting of the First Session of the Thirty-Third Legislature occupies two volumes

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tools, he could target these sensitive areas. The minister has the authority to close areas to off-road vehicles.

Will the minister work with all stakeholders to identify and implement off-road vehicle closures to sensitive sheep habitat?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you. It is important to note that the legislative changes that we made last year create new tools for the government to manage the environmental impacts of ORV use in particularly sensitive areas. The first of these was the ability to create ORV management areas that could limit access by ORVs to allow the area to recover, or limit future access to prevent damage and limit the growth of new trails.

Mr. Speaker, we need to develop an enduring process to identify and create these areas and implement the new tools we have available to us. As I've mentioned — I think we've mentioned this in the House before — we see this system used, just what the member opposite spoke about, for the hunting and fishing regulations as a possible model. However, the act allows government the ability to issue temporary or seasonal protection orders in areas of the ORV management plan, if not in place, and if there is an interest from a First Nation or RRC in using these temporary or seasonal protection orders in specific areas of concern, we would be happy to consider that and will work with them to explore options in implementing this protection as soon as possible.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the day when the minister opens his toolbox and breaks in those new tools.

Mr. Speaker, today the minister can take action for the benefit of Yukon's wild sheep. The Yukon NDP, together with all stakeholders, would be proactive about the threats to wild sheep populations and, further, we would ensure adequate data is collected.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to ensuring adequate baseline data is collected about Yukon's wild sheep population and related habitat degradation in order to develop and implement a sustainable sheep conservation and harvest plan that all stakeholders can support?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're always collecting wildlife data. We just have to look at previous budgets when it comes to wildlife data and the capture of it. We work with our renewable resources councils and our First Nations when it comes to any issues.

I just want to put on the floor of this House that the regulation change proposals that were just put forward are a good example of this government working with our local First Nations, working with the renewable resources councils and working with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board to move forward on issues that are of concern to Yukoners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

##### Motion No. 1047

**Clerk:** Motion No. 1047, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

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

THAT this House urges the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to approve the nomination of the Alaska Highway corridor as a National Historic Site of Canada in time for the commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway in 2017.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today in support of this motion. On October 15, 2015, the Alaska Highway Community Society — or AHCS — of British Columbia, and the Alaska Highway Heritage Society of Yukon submitted a nomination to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to have the Alaska Highway corridor recognized as a national historic site of Canada.

The building of the Alaska Highway is an integral part of Canadian and North American history. It spans some 2,231 kilometres from mile 0 at Dawson Creek, BC, through the Yukon, and on to Delta Junction in Alaska. The proposal to build the Alaska Highway was initiated in the United States as early as the 1920s. British Columbia got involved in the proposal in 1929, wanting to encourage economic development and tourism among regions. A board appointed by American President Herbert Hoover came back to the American government with a report supporting the proposed highway in 1931. Not only did the report support the economic reasoning of such a highway, but it recognized that the highway would certainly benefit the American military. Due to the Great Depression and the Canadian government's reluctance to provide funding for a highway to Alaska, the proposal was not acted and President Franklin Roosevelt continued to push for the building of a highway with tensions ramping up internationally and with Japan. The US felt that such a highway would be instrumental as part of the defence against Japan. Finally, in 1942, after the attack on Pearl Harbor and the beginning of the Pacific conflict in World War II, priorities changed for both Canada and the United States and the construction of the Alaska Highway was approved by the United States army. Canada agreed to the building of the highway provided that the US bore the full cost and that the highway and facilities built within Canada's borders be turned over to Canada at the end of the war. Construction started just over a month after that. After Japan invaded some of the Aleutian Islands, it was sped up, leading to the Alaska Highway being completed less than eight months after the start of construction on October 28, 1942.

The original highway was over 50 kilometres longer than today's Alaska Highway, with many steep grades, poor surfaces, switchbacks, no guardrails and temporary bridges. Some of the meandering lines and many of the switchbacks

were engineered on purpose in order to avoid long, straight stretches that could endanger military supply convoys in the event of an air attack. Many of the worst-winding sections of the highway have been taken out or rerouted, resulting in the straighter and shorter highway that we travel today.

The Alaskan section of the highway was paved during the 1960s, and the Canadian portion of the highway was resurfaced with BST over the years. Historically, the Alaska Highway had milepost markers each mile along the highway. Yukon and BC's portions of the highway have been recalibrated due to some of the rerouting of the highway and have seen the installation of new kilometre markers.

There is a monument at the start of the Alaska Highway, mile 0 in Dawson Creek. The history of these mile markers in Yukon lives on. There are still plenty of people who refer to their addresses at certain mileposts along the highway, even though these have been replaced with a kilometre marker. I'm sure some of us can remember that when the switchover came, there were many people who wanted a milepost souvenir and were able to obtain those.

Every long-time Yukoner has plenty of stories about adventure-filled trips up or down the Alaska Highway. Tales of these trips were often filled with snowstorms, running out of gas, flat tires, running into people you knew and, of course, the hospitality of the many roadside lodges.

The trip used to take much longer than it does now, and there were many lodges, gas stations, restaurants and rest stops along the highway to facilitate the many local and tourist travellers.

In the late 1970s I used to drive between Watson Lake and Whitehorse on a dusty gravel road, and the trip could easily take six to seven hours. Thanks to the building of the Alaska Highway, many communities sprung up around it or were resituated to be closer to the access that the highway provided.

The success of the highway led to the creation of three provincial parks — Liard River Hot Springs, Muncho Lake and Stone Mountain — as well as the formation of Kluane National Park Reserve in 1972.

The building of the Alaska Highway forever changed the way of life in Yukon. The highway led to more economic and efficient ways to service Yukon and Alaska with building and household supplies. The highway also led to a route to market for all of Yukon and northern BC's many natural resources. The highway also facilitated a new market popping up — tourism.

Today you will see many licence plates from all over North America up and down the highway between British Columbia and Alaska and, as you can see, the Alaska Highway corridor has played a huge role in Yukon's history and is certainly deserving of the nomination to become a national historic site of Canada.

The application to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada also includes recommendations that 12 distinct sites in BC and Yukon be recognized as well. These 12 sites include the Northern Alberta Railway Station in Dawson Creek, the historic Kiskatinaw Bridge, Charlie Lake

Cave, the Old Fort Nelson Warden's Cabin, Old Alaska Highway trail at Muncho Lake, and the Liard River Hot Springs in British Columbia.

The Yukon sites nominated include the Watson Lake air terminal building, the Watson Lake Sign Post Forest, the White Pass & Yukon Route railway depot; and the former Northwest Highway System Headquarter Building in Whitehorse, and, in Kluane park, Soldier's Summit and the Donjek route.

I'm honoured to be speaking to you as the member of the Legislative Assembly representing Watson Lake where two of these honoured sites are located. It seems that we might be a little bit ahead of this current initiative to have the highway designated as a historic site. A couple years ago, the Watson Lake Historical Society was successful in having the Sign Post Forest designated as a Yukon historic site.

Watson Lake exists today because of Canadian and US military involvement in World War II. The Watson Lake Airport was built initially as a military airport in 1941 under the Northwest Staging Route program funded by the Government of Canada. As you know, the building of the Alaska Highway followed.

The original Watson Lake townsite was actually at the airport site but was migrated to its existing site during the construction of the Robert Campbell Highway in order to serve as a link between both highways and facilitate the building of the new highway.

As you can see, the Watson Lake Airport terminal building is an important part of our history and in many ways represents the founding of the Town of Watson Lake. There aren't too many Yukoners who haven't stopped by the Sign Post Forest on their way through Watson Lake.

The history of the Sign Post Forest is also tied directly to the military. In 1942, the military air base was located roughly where the townsite is today. There was a directional signpost near the camp, giving mileage and pointing toward the townsite at the airport. While working on the Alaska Highway construction, United States Private Carl Lindley was injured and, while recuperating, was asked to re-paint the directional post. Being very homesick, Private Lindley decided to add his own hometown sign to the post — Danville, Illinois — thus starting a tradition and the beginning of the world-famous Sign Post Forest. Private Lindley's legacy lives on.

Currently there are in excess of 70,000 signs in the forest. Earlier this year, Gary Lindley, who is the youngest son of Carl Lindley, came to Watson Lake and put up two new signs and was presented with a commemorative plaque from the Town of Watson Lake. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that he was pleased indeed to have his father so recognized in the Yukon.

This site was certainly deserving as a historic designation, not only as a part of the history of Yukon, but as a world-famous site, which has seen visitors from all over the globe. In fact, the Sign Post Forest was recognized with a stamp from Canada Post, which showcased iconic tourist sites in Canada.

The Alaska Highway is the lifeline for the Yukon. On it, our fuel, food and all other items we desire arrive to meet our

needs. One has only to remember that in 2012, the highway was closed for four days due to a major wash-out near Rancheria and it became all too clear to anyone on this side of the break in the road how important the highway was.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this House to support this motion and hope that the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada can see fit to approve this designation in time to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the completion of the Alaska Highway in 2017.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Motion No. 1047 to urge the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to approve the nomination of the Alaska Highway corridor as a national historic site of Canada in time for the commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway in 2017.

The construction of the Alaska Highway was one of the most ambitious engineering projects ever undertaken. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Aleutian Islands and the Alaskan coast was an unprotected flank. By February, President Roosevelt had approved the construction of the Alaska-Canadian highway from Dawson Creek, BC, to Fairbanks, Alaska. This was a world war, and the US government didn't stop to notify the Canadian government in advance of their actions. In fact, US soldiers were stationed in Edmonton before the Prime Minister of Canada was notified that the Americans had landed and were building the Alaska Highway.

Nobody stopped to study the social and environmental impact — and impact there was, both good and bad. Measles, meningitis, and whisky, jazz bands and movies, new ideas and, above all, mobility — travel, even in winter when the rivers were frozen and the boats couldn't run. The Alcan project changed the Yukon profoundly and forever.

The effects of the Alcan project were felt far beyond the Yukon's borders. Among the seven regiments of US army engineers who constructed the Pioneer Trail in just eight months in 1942, three were segregated regiments with all-white officers and all-black troops. The so-called "Negro soldiers" distinguished themselves despite harsh conditions, exacerbated by systemic racism. They were given the worst equipment, but historians regard this as a major step on the long, hard road to civil rights. Captured in a journalist's photograph, the moment when Cat operator Private Refines Sims of the black 97<sup>th</sup> engineers, met and shook hands with Private Alfred Jalufka of the white 18<sup>th</sup> engineers. The symbolism was enormous. It meant that the Pioneer Trail was now continuous from end to end, but it meant much more for the image of black soldiers in America.

Road-building was considered men's work and indeed, men outnumbered women in the Yukon by a factor of 24:1. Nonetheless, women played an important role in the Alcan project. In addition to the hundreds of civilian women who were secretaries, launderers, teachers, nurses and cooks, one unit of the United States Women's Army Corps — the famous WACs — served as tele-typists, telephone operators, chauffeurs and air operations specialists. Women served as

pilots, ferrying planes to Alaska to be leased to Russia for the war effort. At Liard River Hot Springs, a historical plaque tells the story of the weekly event when women who were part of the Alaska Highway war effort were allowed to use the hot springs for bathing one night of the week.

The Alcan brought a host of new possibilities for young women in the Yukon. If you were one of the lucky few, it meant invitations nearly every day to dances, tobogganing, skating, hiking, picnics, boat trips, and car trips. For the less fortunate, it meant unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, and even incarceration. According to the Yukon Archives Alaska Highway website, which was one of several good resources I found helpful in preparing to debate this motion, during the construction of the Alaska Highway, venereal diseases reached epidemic proportions, causing Yukon government to introduce "The Venereal Diseases Protection Ordinance", which allowed women with venereal diseases to be jailed until they were cured; however, men were not charged under this law and it had little effect on controlling the problem. I'm sure the Member for Riverdale South and the Minister of Health and Social Services will take special note of that piece of history.

The lives of Yukon First Nations changed forever when the Cats came eating up the bush. For some it meant only disease, sadness and loss, but for many it meant jobs and the possibility of travel as never before. Teslin Tlingit Elder Pearl Keenan remembers being a teenage girl and learning about the coming road when the surveyors' plane landed on Teslin Lake, frightening her dog team. Pearl remembers that, before the highway, it was a rough five-day trip by boat to Whitehorse and a two-day walk to Tagish to visit Tlingit relatives. I've enjoyed more than once hearing Pearl reminisce about her memories of the Alaska Highway. They weren't all happy memories.

Without the help of First Nation guides who knew the existing trails, the road could never have been built as speedily as it was. For many of the First Nation people, it was the first time they had seen a white face or a black face. I've mentioned the use of First Nation guides to help the soldiers find and use existing trails. I also had the good fortune to meet Angela Carlick, a Kaska Dena elder who told me stories about her father, Liard Tom. He guided the army surveyors in building a significant portion of the Alaska Highway near Watson Lake. Angela wanted his role to be remembered in history.

Angela died last month on October 29 at the age of 87. She was born under a tree at Tom Creek on May 10 in 1928. She was raised living a traditional life and witnessed many changes. Angela was the youngest daughter and the last living child of 14 brothers and sisters born to Liard and Eda Tom. Angela taught her children and grandchildren how to live in the bush. She was quick to remind them that the hardships they have today are their own choice. She taught them how to live off the land.

Angela wrote a letter to Jim Robb, which was published in his "Colourful Five Percent" column in the *Yukon News*. It speaks to the construction of the Alaska Highway: "My dad

started working on building the Watson Lake Airport for the government in the summer of 1942. Liard Tom contributed a lot to the development of the airport and the building of the Alaska Highway and I want him recognized for this.”

She also said: “When I was a child we lived with my family about 18 miles up the Liard River from the Upper Liard bridge. This is where my dad had his trapline, in the Rancheria River area, where we trapped for a living in the bush. In the summer months, we would move to Lower Post, BC, near the Hudson Bay Trading Post and lived in a tent.”

In August of 1942, she used to visit Frank Slim’s youngest daughter and play dollies with her. “Frank Slim and his family came down from Dease Lake, BC, with a sternwheeler and barges that were carrying a bulldozer and dump trucks to be used in the building of the Watson Lake Airport.

“This was war time in the summer of 1942. I think the government flew Frank Slim by plane to Dease Lake from Whitehorse. Frank Slim worked on building a sternwheeler and barges on the shores of Dease Lake with his two sons and other workers. There were government workers who came with Frank Slim on the sternwheeler and barges. Frank Slim was one of the captains steering the sternwheeler and barges loaded with heavy construction equipment down the winding and narrow Dease River from Dease Lake to Lower Post.

“Frank Slim and his wife and two sons, Tony and George, and youngest daughter stayed in one of the bunkhouses referred to as Taku, located beside the Hudson Bay store in Lower Post, BC. I think his daughter was about eight or 10 years old and that is who I visited to play together. The government workers on the barges drove the equipment of bulldozers and dump trucks.

“As children, we were all sitting on the side of the hill by the Liard River in Lower Post watching the sternwheeler and barges land and the equipment being unloaded. There was one sternwheeler with a barge and two other boats with motors and barges. This is the very first time I had seen a truck and bulldozer.

“The bulldozer drove off the barge and started pushing a road right away on the bank of the river. The bulldozer then started pushing through the bushes in Lower Post and worked on making a road to Watson Lake. The dump trucks were then unloaded and started following the bulldozer. We followed the bulldozer and watched it push trees down and were very curious about this because we had never seen anything like this before in our lives.

“My dad moved us to Watson Lake after this and I think Frank Slim was still around Lower Post.

“My dad started working on building the Watson Lake Airport for the government in the summer of 1942. Liard Tom contributed a lot to the development of the airport and the building of the Alaska Highway and I want him recognized for this.”

Mr. Speaker, that’s a telling story from the past that I think would be deserving in and of itself as one of the historical markers.

There was an air route to Alaska, the Northwest Staging Route series of airstrips that extended into the Soviet Union as the Alaska-Siberian air route. The US Air Force ferried 7,000 war planes from US factories to the European front in the USSR, thus the Alaska Highway and the Northwest Staging Route became the only transportation network to supply both the Pacific and the European fronts during World War II.

The first phase was organizing the air route through northern Canada and the permanent joint board of defence — Canada and the United States — decided in the autumn of 1940 that a string of airports should be constructed at Canadian expense between the City of Edmonton in central Alberta and the Alaska-Yukon border. Late in 1941, the Canadian government reported that rough landing fields had been completed.

“With the outbreak of war, American lines of communication with Alaska by sea were seriously threatened and alternative routes had to be opened. The string of airports through the lonely tundra and forests of northwest Canada provided an air route to Alaska which was practically invulnerable to attack, and it seemed to be in the best interests of international defence to develop them and open a highway which would at once be a service road for the airports and a means for transporting essential supplies to the Alaskan outposts. In response to this need, the US Army engaged in the Alaskan Highway project.

“The meandering character of the Alaska Highway belied the speed and determination with which it was built.” The meandering nature of it also had to do with the knowledge that the First Nation guides had of indigenous routes, which were not necessarily the straight-as-an-arrow approach to roads that people like to take today where it is possible. There were “10,000 US Army engineers and 6,000 civilians, hired by the US Public Roads Administration, had orders to push a 700-mile pioneer road through the north in the space of one season — from thaw to freeze-up. This tight time frame required a quick and dirty approach to road building unheard of during peacetime. The planning stage was extremely short, little was known about the route, and there was little opportunity to learn. Once funds were allocated, troops had slightly over one month to mobilize. The construction was full of difficulties and challenges, from getting supplies to surveying northern terrain to dealing with permafrost. An additional challenge was that the US Army and the Public Road Administration revised the project several times during the eight months of construction.”

Many of the soldiers came from Edmonton and north to build the highway. However, two regiments travelled from Skagway over the White Pass & Yukon Route railroad and were stationed in Carcross. They built the winding road through Tagish to Jakes Corner, where they met up with the regiments working their way north from Watson Lake.

As this short history demonstrates, the Alaska Highway corridor is a place rich in history, culture and heritage. During 1992, the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of the Alaska Highway was an extensive project. There was a legion of volunteers and over 300 businesses and numerous

government agencies took part in the anniversary activity. A total of 74 sanctioned events were held within the Yukon, and the Yukon experienced a 19.9-percent increase in visitors in 1992. This increase is largely considered to be a result of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. We don't have a long time until the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017, but I am pleased to see that we are working to support the nomination of the Alaska Highway as a heritage site.

There were social and cultural benefits during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. Interest and awareness in Yukon's social and cultural history was raised. There was a more balanced interpretation of the highway construction through interpretation of the native role and perspective. In fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the events was a conference in Fort St. John, where a number of historians came and presented papers on various aspects of the construction of the Alaska Highway, including the aboriginal roles and perspectives. It generated educational benefits in the public school system and created awareness about the role of tourism in communities.

So the National Historic Sites of Canada tells the story of defining moments in Canadian history and it helps Canadians celebrate their shared cultural heritage. The Alaska Highway corridor is rich in history, culture and heritage. It serves as a major transportation corridor through northeastern British Columbia and Yukon since its initial construction in 1942. It is a top destination for outdoor adventure and wildlife watching. It is known for its stunning mountain ranges, forests and pristine waterways. Recognizing the role of the Alaska Highway in shaping the region, the Alaska Highway Community Society in BC and the Alaska Highway Heritage Society in Yukon have joined forces to submit the nomination of the Alaska Highway corridor as a national historic site of Canada. The vision of both organizations is to commemorate and promote the shared history of the highway's cultural landscape and to work with communities to protect and interpret key historic sites and resources of cultural value.

The construction of the Alaska Highway was a defining moment in Canadian history. Recognizing the Alaska Highway as a nationally significant historic site meets almost all of the criteria that Parks Canada has set out in order to designate a national historic site. It illustrates an exceptional creative achievement in concept and design. It illustrates or symbolizes a cultural tradition, a way of life and ideas important to the development of Canada. It is associated with more than one person deemed of national historic significance and in fact, there are a number of both recognized and unnamed and unrecognized heroes who took part in the construction of the Alaska Highway, and their work is worthy of recognition in this designation.

The Alaska Highway is associated with an event that is deemed of national historic significance. We spent some time in acknowledging Remembrance Day and speaking of events in Yukon throughout World War II. I am pleased to support this motion to recognize the Alaska Highway as a national historic site and I hope that the contributions that we make on both sides of the Assembly in debate this afternoon will be of

some interest and some import to the decision-makers for that motion.

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I would like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion. Of course I will be supporting it and I anticipate hopefully all members of the Legislative Assembly supporting it as well.

I would also like to take a moment to thank the Member for Copperbelt South for her remarks. Certainly there were positive aspects, as well as some challenging aspects, to the construction of the Alaska Highway and I thank her for highlighting many of those through her remarks. Perhaps what I'll do is start with a little bit of a personal story with respect to the highway and then move on into how my department, Highways and Public Works, has been involved.

I guess the first order of business though is to thank some individual Yukoners for their work on this, leading up to where we are here today. First of all, Senator Dan Lang — I know this is something that's important to him. He came and met with me and the Minister of Tourism and gave us a background of what he was trying to accomplish here. I think his work was a result of the work of the society created, the Alaska Highway Heritage Society in Yukon, and I would like to single out a couple of the members who came to meet with me as well about this project, Sally Robinson and Janna Powell, both strong advocates for what we're debating here today and hopefully in the success of getting this accomplished.

I think there are two incidents in recent history in the Yukon that have really changed the face of our territory. The first was the Klondike Gold Rush, the rush of stampedes over the Chilkoot Pass and through other routes into the goldfields of the Klondike, as well as stopping at the various other spots along the way, realizing their dreams — and perhaps not realizing their dreams — as part of that historical event.

The second that I would say was of historic significance to our territory was the building of the Alaska Highway — the 1,700 miles from Dawson Creek, British Columbia to Delta Junction in Alaska — that really opened up the Yukon and led to the development of numerous other pieces of highway throughout the years that formed an incredible part of our infrastructure. We should be very proud of the highway infrastructure that we have here in the Yukon. I think that, for a northern jurisdiction, we're unrivaled in North America with the amount of infrastructure that we have for highways, given the footprint of land that we have. We have the Dempster Highway, which is the only all-season road that crosses the Arctic Circle in Canada and is another extremely important piece of highway infrastructure

Again, we're here to celebrate and talk about the Alaska Highway and its significance.

I was four years old in the summer of 1973 when my family moved here from Saskatchewan. I have some memories of the drive up. There were my mom and dad and five of the seven Kent kids were in the vehicle. My younger brother was fairly young at the time.

In a few spots on that highway, it was quite a lot less developed obviously than it is now, but I remember being quite concerned and scared around Muncho Lake with no guardrails on the road and the lake and how tight that was and how windy that road was. I remember the taste of dust, getting in behind a few tractor-trailers. Back in those days, there was probably a little bit of the smell of second-hand cigarette smoke and other things that were a little bit more normal then they are today as far as the safety of children who are travelling and respect for children.

I remember the pavement. The asphalt didn't start until we got to the Carcross Cut-off. It was a gravel road until then with a few hardtop areas throughout, but that's another vivid memory I have of moving here in 1973. I'm still very proud to call the Yukon home. I've travelled the highway in both directions a number of times since then. I think as Canadians and Yukoners, we should be proud of the improvements that we've made to that highway and what it represents today for Yukoners and Alaskans and the many visitors who travel on it.

Mr. Speaker, I should also pay gratitude to the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works, the Member for Kluane. It was him and others from the local Legion and all of our caucus colleagues who a number of years ago — within this mandate of course — dedicated the Alaska Highway to all of our veterans. I think the travelling public will see those signs up around certain communities. It's a proud moment when we can honour veterans for the commitment and sacrifices that they made. I know, obviously, yourself, Mr. Speaker, and the Member for Kluane are proud veterans and we thank you throughout the year and especially now when we're debating this important motion for all of your contributions and the contributions of all veterans who have served, not only our country, but have served many countries around the globe.

Mr. Speaker, the Alaska Highway heritage project is being advanced by two NGO proponents: the Alaska Highway Community Society in British Columbia and the Alaska Highway Heritage Society here in Yukon. They've been working together to nominate the Alaska Highway as a national historic site of Canada — as has been mentioned — in time for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the highway and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation in 2017.

While the designation is for the length of the Alaska Highway in Canada, there are specific site nodes that have been identified for inclusion in the nomination. Some have been mentioned here today, but I apologize if I am repeating any. They include sites such as the Liard River Hot Springs, Soldier's Summit, trails such as the Old Alaska Highway trail at Muncho Lake and buildings such as the Beaver Creek Lodge and Our Lady of the Way Catholic Church in Haines Junction.

There are two Yukon government properties that are identified as possible nodes as well: the Watson Lake air terminal building and the White Pass & Yukon Route depot in Whitehorse. The Watson Lake air terminal was a key piece of infrastructure to support the Northwest Staging Route that I'm

going to talk a little bit more about in a second. It was constructed in 1941 and the control tower was constructed shortly after by the US military, which operated the facility until 1944. The structure is unique in its log cladding and is the last remaining air terminal along the Northwest Staging Route.

The tower has not been used for a number of years, but the terminal building is still in use and houses the local offices of our aviation branch. There was an assessment of the building in 2013 and it was found to be in good condition. The tower itself, as I mentioned, hasn't been used, but is home to a colony of bats, so it's an important habitat for bats in that area.

The White Pass & Yukon Route depot in Whitehorse is also one of the government-owned buildings that has this designation — one of the nodes identified. It has been designated an historic building by the City of Whitehorse. Designation for the entire route would involve submission of letters of consent from the Yukon government and evidence would be required. That conversation is possible and planned. We have provided those letters to the society and to the decision-makers.

When it comes to maintaining those facilities, of course we'll be able to keep them in safe and usable condition. I know, as I've mentioned, both of them are used and are important pieces of infrastructure in not only Watson Lake, but again the White Pass & Yukon Route station here in the City of Whitehorse.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I know we've talked a lot about the Alaska Highway itself, but the Northwest Staging Route is something that was also very important, as aircraft were ferried between the United States and Russia to support their efforts during World War II. There's a memorial in Fairbanks, Alaska, that is dedicated to the lend-lease. It commemorates the shipment of those aircraft to the Soviet Union along the Northwest Staging Route.

There was a series of airstrips, airport and radio-ranging stations built in Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Alaska during World War II, and then extended into the Soviet Union as the Alaska-Siberian air route. The Minister of Environment and I happened to be in Edmonton at the same time and we had the chance to visit the Alberta Aviation Museum. Much of that museum is dedicated to this important route.

I would want Yukoners to reflect upon the importance of the Northwest Staging Route as you reflect on the importance of the Alaska Highway. The series of airstrips throughout the territory — many of them are still active and in use today and are of tremendous benefit to citizens of the Yukon, as we go about our daily lives.

I think one of the other unique aspects, particularly at the Watson Lake Airport, is the hangar that is in place there. It is a hangar of historical significance as well. I believe it's privately owned, and the firm that owns it conducts maintenance activities there on their fleet, even though I think most of their service is out of Whitehorse and the northern Yukon.

When the Minister of Community Services and I were able to go up to the arrival of Viking Air's Twin Otter,

celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Twin Otter this summer, we were at the Air North hangar and were speaking to the CEO of that company.

They were a little bit late getting in because of the amount of time that he wanted to spend at the Watson Lake Airport looking around not only the terminal building and the historic photos that are on the walls in the terminal building, but poking around the hangar as well. He was very excited to see the hangar there and bask in history of that. For aviation buffs, the northwest staging route is as significant and important as the Alaska Highway itself.

I wanted to thank all of those individuals who have contributed so far to this application. I am hoping, as the Member for Copperbelt South mentioned, that we can add our voices and help those making this decision to make a positive one with respect to the Alaska Highway. A big thanks to the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion today, and I look forward to hearing from other members of the House on their perspective on what the Alaska Highway means to them.

With that, I will conclude my remarks.

**Mr. Barr:** I am also proud to rise today to speak in support of the ongoing campaign to support the Alaska Highway Heritage Project's nomination of the Alaska Highway corridor as a national historic site. I would like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this forward and to thank all those who have worked behind the scenes from different sections of the highway to have this become a reality.

I would like to share some of my own personal stories as well as some of the information that I have been able to gather from various sources that give some of the history of the Alaska Highway. I know that many of us know the Alaska Highway as the major military undertaking that was built to sustain northwestern defence and resupply routes. The idea of a road to Alaska began before the first shots of World War II were fired. Some believe the landscape that eventually supported the highway is a rich tapestry of human geography that has been occupied continuously for almost 14,000 years by indigenous peoples dating back to the original immigration of humans here through the Beringia.

I know that in history we read and hear things and understand things to be true to history. From coming up the Alaska Highway 32 years ago and some of the information that I have and present today — as I listen to some of the members across the room talk about coming up in 1973, and first seeing pavement at the Carcross Cut-off and some of the things that were researched. It says it was paved from 1960 — 90 percent of it. Certainly that was not my experience coming up the road.

Just remembering Trutch Mountain, which is no longer there now, and all the switchbacks that you would come around — when it was raining on that road, I always kind of thought that if you could imagine yourself driving a vehicle on the top of a melting Sweet Marie chocolate bar, trying to stay

on the road — that's how I remember many a time trying to manoeuvre hundreds of miles of that road.

When I first came up here back then in the early 1980s — coming back from Ontario, we weren't taught that Yukon was in Canada. Knowing that now we have commercials for domestic travel and tourism to the Yukon — one of those things that has taken us to this point in time, where the Alaska Highway is certainly not like what many of us experienced over the years driving up it — it takes a much shorter time. There is no more Trutch Mountain. It is a road that I consider now for RVs. There are many stops, and the corridor between the pavement and the BST to the actual bush line so you can see wildlife and so on and so forth is a far cry from what it used to be. You can see for miles and miles for some periods when you are driving down the road.

The opportunities, as I'll speak to later through the tourism of this upcoming 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary — it is great that this motion is coming forward now so that we can work with our other partners through the economic possibilities for tourism with the folks from BC, Alaska and so forth on the route to highlight our section in the Yukon. You know, it says the Alaska Highway, so we certainly want to be able to — as we move forward — look at how we can celebrate the route that the people will be driving through the Yukon.

As my colleague was speaking to earlier, some of the stories that are very positive in the history of the Alaska Highway and also, oftentimes as we look at the advantages of being able to drive to Whitehorse — about 55 minutes from my door, with the speed limit. Knowing that even that highway from Jakes Corner, as it was the original Alaska Highway, came down through there to Carcross, up to the Carcross Cut-off, before they made the section — there were mileposts along there and listening to the stories of the elders that lived in Carcross and talked about how, before this road, they were trails that people walked or took a dog team on.

My travels with Elder Art Johns over the years, just from Tagish, on that original route of the Alaska Highway, driving to Carcross — that they would take a day to get from Tagish to Carcross sometimes, because there was no rush. Pointing out a creek where — “That's where we used to always stop, me and my dad, Johnnie Johns. We had a pack dog and we'd just sit there by the creek and maybe we'd shoot a grouse along the way and cook it up and make a bedroll and, the next day, get up and walk the rest of the way.” There were trails — many of these.

The rich history, I think, pre-contact — when the Minister of Highways and Public Works spoke of the gold rush. It was a major life change for the Yukon, as was the Alaska Highway a major life change for the Yukon.

When I read the website of [www.ouralaskahighway.com](http://www.ouralaskahighway.com), it stated that it wanted to share the history of all those who contributed to the Alaska Highway but also, in that history, they did not want to shy away from the difficulties that arose from such an endeavour.

As we know — the Member for Copperbelt South already spoke of some of it — as the gold rush happened, the issues that it brought on that — the Alaska Highway brought another



whole bunch of social problems that she spoke of, which, on the website, they want to talk about that stuff.

I think in the spirit of truth and reconciliation and not allowing history to repeat itself, it's very important that, in an honouring and respectful way, we do recount, in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, the major contributions not only that the First Nation guides took part in. I know Johnnie Johns from Teslin, to Whitehorse and beyond — I do believe that, in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, Art Johns' son did a re-enactment on horseback, as Johnnie Johns had done to lead the army through. They used to walk those same trails that I talked about and take days to get to celebrations, whether it was just in Carcross or in Champagne, and have three days of gatherings, just as part of a way of life.

That whole way of life was disrupted. I can't help but think back over my short time in the territory, and my involvement with residential schools and listening to some of the stories of when the army came through and set up in Carcross.

There are old photos we can see; there are barracks and a staging area of materials needed and equipment to push on. What that did to the community and the people at the time was that it brought lots of change. With the residential school at the time, part of the tragedy of that was that — when we speak of truth and reconciliation and honouring the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and those things, what we're trying to do today is recognize that we have to do things differently, because what happened as a result of this highway and the negative aspects is that in those schools at night, there were a lot of soldiers who were in the Carcross area who were brought into the schools. It's very difficult for me to even say this: I can't imagine the people living through these times when soldiers would be brought in to be with the senior girls at nighttime — lineups.

That is part of our history that is very hard to talk about, yet it's a part of acknowledging that with all good, there is bad, and with the bad, there is some good. But not recognizing the difficulties that some people had to endure would be doing an injustice, not only to our history — yet when we're looking at major developments in the territory, as we proceed to learn about the social problems that do arise, we have brought them forward in this House. When we come forward with huge influxes of people from outside — as my member spoke about the instances of sexually transmitted diseases. Not only that, but when I think of some of those stories alone, how do we find a way if it's part of our responsibility to share some of that? How do we do it in a dignified way not to re-traumatize anyone, but to share it so we can learn from the past as we move forward?

I know we're talking about huge populations coming to the territory and it's incumbent upon us to have policies in place to think about how we're going to deal with the ramifications — the good and the bad.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called upon governments to repudiate concepts used to justify sovereignty over indigenous peoples and land, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, a recognition of the

Alaska Highway as a national historic site of Canada must be in keeping with this — the truth and reconciliation call is a call to action.

So I do believe that we have opportunities here, when we know that this celebration is coming forward in 2017 to not only look back at how we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary to raise the economic opportunities, but also to enhance some of the truths. There are great opportunities that can come into play in sharing our wildlife, as we talked about previously in the House — wildlife viewing opportunities, as it states on the website, and how we capitalize on some of the strategies that we have in promoting tourism in the territory.

I would like to state from some of my notes here that the Alaska Highway heritage project campaign to make the Alaska Highway corridor a national historic site of Canada is timely because of that 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and it will also coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canadian federation in 2017.

So in closing, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the work that has been done to this point in time in the advancement and acknowledgement of the Alaska Highway to be an historic site, and also how we look at how we can work with our partners in having this be not only a great experience for people who will come just because it's an anniversary, but how we can look at — it's always good, we say in the music business, to get the gig. Getting it is not the thing; it's how do you get asked back. How are we going to ask and how are we going to entertain them — the increases that we have seen from the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary — so they keep coming back and be able to extend that not only then, as we have the Alaska Highway, but get people up to Dawson, up to the Silver Trail, up to the Yukon in general and really show off what we have. I think about the opportunities with our television campaigns and how we're going to extend the monies for this domestic travel and international travel so that we can keep building on the initiatives already started.

I do want to say that we will be supporting — myself — this Alaska Highway heritage project and this motion that the Member for Watson Lake brought forward. I want to thank her for bringing this forward, and I look forward to hearing other comments from my colleagues in the House on this important timely opportunity for us all.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly like to also take this opportunity to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward. Certainly the motion, as it reads:

THAT this House urges the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to approve the nomination of the Alaska Highway corridor as a national historic site of Canada in time for the commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway in 2017.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked to many constituents of mine in Porter Creek South, who have travelled the highway for many, many, years and certainly it's always a delight to hear their stories and the challenges they often faced along the way. Certainly as my time as Minister of Tourism and Culture, this

was an important issue and one that I paid some attention to. We know right now that the BC sites that they are aiming to include are: the Northern Alberta Railway; the historic Kiskatinaw Bridge; Charlie Lake Cave; Old Fort Nelson Warden's Cabin; the Old Alaska Highway trail at Muncho Lake; and the Liard River Hot Springs.

Looking into the Yukon sites that are on the list to be designated are the Watson Lake air terminal building that the Minister of Highways and Public Works so eloquently spoke about; the Watson Lake Sign Post Forest — that I had the opportunity as Minister of Tourism and Culture to — along with the MLA for Watson Lake — designate the Sign Post Forest as a Yukon historic site; the White Pass & Yukon Route railway depot here in Whitehorse, the former Northwest Highway System Headquarters building and, in Kluane, Soldier's Summit and Donjek Route. I know the Member for Kluane has often spoken very highly of those two areas in his riding.

I am certainly supportive of the Alaska Highway Community Society's initiative to designate the Alaska Highway as a national historic site of Canada. The Alaska Highway continues to be a significant attraction for Yukon visitors and an important corridor for the thousands of travellers into Yukon each summer, and I'll speak more to the tourism component in a moment.

The Department of Tourism and Culture's Historic Sites unit has agreed to conduct workshops in several communities — and certainly those have taken place — to help them identify important heritage values and historic places in the territory. I know that when I was minister, officials from the Department of Tourism and Culture continued to work with the Alaska Highway Community Society as the project's scope and requirements were fully defined.

In 2010, the Alaska Highway Community Society was formed by the local governments of northeastern British Columbia to jointly pursue designation for the Alaska Highway corridor as a national historic site of Canada. The long-range goal for the society was to achieve federal designation as a national historic site of Canada by 2017 — the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alaska Highway and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada. The project will require identification of significant historic sites, historic background consultation with First Nations and community groups, and approval from the BC and Yukon governments. I'm pleased to see that much of that work has been accomplished.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you'll recall that, during my time as Minister of Tourism and Culture, I had the opportunity to attend the 2012 MVPA Alaska Highway Convoy launch ceremony in Dawson Creek. As you recall, that was August 3, 2012. I was joined down there by: the Hon. Blair Lekstrom, the MLA for Peace River South and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure; Bob Zimmer, the MP for Prince George-Peace River; His Worship, the Mayor of Dawson Creek, Mike Bernier; and the Convoy Commander, Terry Shelswell, whom I'm sure you had the opportunity to meet.

I was able to extend a special recognition and an acknowledgment to the members of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association who, as collectors, certainly have an interest in preserving the important role military vehicles have played in history. They were very excited to be, at that time, travelling the Alaska Highway. The MVPA members seemed very thankful that they were taking this journey during a time of peace — something we've often spoken about in this Legislature. I'm certain that we've all taken the opportunity to try to imagine what it was like to be in military service during a time of war and then, on top of that, be sent to a remote region of Canada's far north to build a road. I think that, for some, they must have been wondering who came up with such a crazy idea, but, crazy or not, that road has certainly gone down in history as one of the greatest engineering feats of modern times.

We often take time to honour those men and women whose achievement to build the Alaska Highway has given them a place in our collective record of what democracy means and the freedoms we can never, ever take for granted. We remember the building of the Alaska Highway as a major event in Yukon's history. In fact, the building of the highway has had as much of an impact to Yukon as did the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898. It was the beginning of a change in travel, a change in economic diversity and a change in business opportunities, and it enhanced the relationship between Canada and the US.

There are many stories associated with the building of the Alaska Highway, the unflinching duty to complete the road within an extraordinary time frame and the dedication that it took for so many to see that through. I know many have a personal connection to the Alaska Highway through a loved one or a friend who may have helped build the road, then known as the Alcan Highway. During the MVPA Alaska Highway convoy, they put thousands of miles on their vehicles and some vehicles, I might add, likely performed 70 years ago during the building of the Alaska Highway — and some vehicles that have seen other military campaigns certainly also making their mark on history.

I'm certain that those making that journey had the added pleasure of meeting many Yukoners along the way in places like Faro, Ross River and Beaver Creek. I'm also certain that experiencing our local history and northern cultures first-hand, including perhaps some of our colourful five percent, is something they won't soon ever forget. That experience — celebrating and honouring the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building of the Alaska Highway — was, I'm sure, a memorable milestone for many who took part.

I would like to make mention of the Lions Club that hosted a barbecue for the MVPA convoy group. As we all know in this Legislature, the Lions Club is a dedicated group of Yukoners that does so much for our community, certainly spending countless hours and perhaps sometimes thankless hours raising money for different initiatives and helping individuals and communities alike. I want to extend our thanks to the Lions Club for the work that they do in our territory and for the hard work and dedication.

I would be remiss not to mention the staff of the Yukon Transportation Museum who, as you know, offered their site for their stopover in Whitehorse — a big thanks to them for the work that they do.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you've already done so, but I would encourage members of the Legislative Assembly and Yukoners alike to check out the [www.mvpa.org](http://www.mvpa.org) website. Certainly there is some good information on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I know, in speaking to many of the members, as did you, that they were very anxious and already anticipating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alaska Highway and perhaps making that journey once again.

The Government of Yukon acknowledges the important role of the Yukon Transportation Museum in protecting, preserving and interpreting Yukon's transportation history — certainly the Alaska Highway falls into that. Under the Department of Tourism and Culture, they provide annual funding in operation and maintenance to the museum as well as access to funding for special projects and collections care assistance. The museum is operated in a building that is leased from Yukon government and capital upgrades to the facility have certainly taken place over the years.

In order for us to get people here to travel the highway, we need to find creative ways to market our territory. Under the Department of Tourism and Culture, I would certainly like to extend my thanks to the current Minister of Tourism and Culture for her diligent work. The utilized cooperative marketing initiative is a strategic tool to significantly increase its global marketing reach and its impact. These cooperative marketing initiatives focus on projects where partners match Tourism Yukon's budget for the initiative, which doubles that marketing initiative. Through cooperative marketing, the Yukon government leverages approximately \$1.8 million each year from marketing partners and stakeholders — impressive, to say the least.

The Department of Tourism and Culture has cooperative marketing initiatives in three areas, and those would be travel trade marketing, partnership marketing and local industry partnerships. There are certain specific pots of money that are allocated each year with marketing and building those markets overseas and building those partnership marketing agreements with NGOs, non-traditional partners and working very diligently with the Canadian Tourism Commission.

As you will remember, a couple of years ago when I was Minister of Tourism and Culture, we initiated the visitor tracking program. The information that we received from that program was very valuable in moving forward. I know that in areas like Watson Lake and Beaver Creek, there were stations set up where people interviewed travellers, finding out just a little bit more information about where they were from and who they were and why they were visiting our amazing territory. The results from that visitor tracking program carried out confirmed the importance in growth potential of Yukon's tourism industry to the territory's economy.

We're attracting growing numbers of visitors from around the world. In fact, annual revenue for Yukon's tourism industry is now over \$250 million each year. The results of the

survey show that visitation to Yukon continues to increase year after year after year. The survey data provided industry and government with valuable information about our visitors and insights into the industry growth that we have certainly seen increasing.

We know that Yukon is becoming a must-see destination around the world. We know that Yukon was designated by *Lonely Planet* as a top-10 must-see travel destination in 2013. We know that *Reader's Digest* and *Outside* magazines have highlighted Yukon as a must-see Canadian destination, highlighting some of the exciting new visitor experiences that Yukon has to offer.

We know that there was a letter of agreement signed with the Klondike Visitors Association committing to work together on a number of marketing related projects and initiatives, and our marketing project with CanNor resulted in an increase in higher yield overseas visitors, which has offset anticipated decline in visitors from the US and other countries suffering from depressed economies.

Often people won't associate our overseas market with the Alaska Highway travel, but one only has to travel the Alaska Highway to see vehicles from, really, all over the world, including Europe, travelling and having those experiences as a number of us here have.

We continue to demonstrate bold leadership in our work to grow Yukon's tourism economy and increase tourism revenue. Rather than seeking to centrally manage the tourism industry, I know the minister has purposefully worked to establish a wide range of collaborative partnerships, and I commend her on that work. Successful partnerships with organizations such as the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, the Klondike Visitors Association, the Association franco-yukonnaise, Holland America, Parks Canada, the Canadian Tourism Commission and many others continue to boost tourism here in our territory. Rather than simply relying on domestic travel markets, this Yukon Party government has reached out across the globe to attract visitors.

We've also provided strong leadership for Yukon's growing tourism sector and we look forward to many more exciting initiatives in the future. This Yukon Party government has proven that, through hard work and bold leadership, we can produce positive results.

In closing, I'm pleased to support the Alaska Highway communities board initiative to designate the Alaska Highway has a national historic site of Canada. The Alaska Highway continues to be a significant attraction for Yukon visitors from around the world and an important corridor for thousands of travellers coming to Yukon each summer.

I understand that officials from the Department of Tourism and Culture will continue to work with the Alaska Highway non-profit groups as the project scope and requirements are really fully defined, as I spoke to earlier.

Interestingly enough, I just have a fast fact. In 2006, Yukon Archives created a virtual exhibit to showcase its extensive holdings pertaining to the planning, construction and impacts of the Alaska Highway. That is available at [alaskahighwayarchives.ca](http://alaskahighwayarchives.ca).

Again I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward today. Certainly, as colleagues from both sides of the floor have indicated, there is great support for this motion. I certainly will be one of those in support of it.

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** It's a great privilege to rise in the House today to speak to Motion No. 1047. I think this is really important — the nomination of the Alaska Highway corridor as a national historic site of Canada, especially in time for our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway.

Mr. Speaker, I've been part of this project almost from the start, I believe, as the Highways and Public Works minister when I first met with the BC group that was getting it started, and then through the fruition to the Yukon group — and I'll speak to that a little more.

I do want to talk a little bit about the history and how incredible the engineering was back then and what they did. In the middle of March 1942, approximately one month after President Franklin Roosevelt authorized the highway, the Army Corps of Engineers began arriving in Alaska. More than 10,000 soldiers came, with 250,000 tons of material for their mission. Rather than proceeding from one point and in one direction, seven segments were posted in strategic positions along the route, building the north-south. Each group would eventually meet up with other units, and finally they met at Soldier's Summit, and I'll speak to that a little bit more.

Their method was simple. Surveyors worked roughly 10 miles ahead of the bulldozers and the men who cleared the path. The surveyors would map the exact route and, soon enough, the men behind them would catch up and blaze a path. A battalion of bulldozers cleared the way by knocking down trees in the path of 50 to 90 feet across. Transporting equipment across the rough terrain was difficult and, when necessary items didn't show up, engineers would be forced to cut the trees by themselves and the other vegetation by hand.

Once the path was cleared, the second battalion brought up the rear and creatively flattened the road surface. Of course, muskeg and mud was a big of an issue. Mr. Speaker, you've probably seen some of the pictures. Speed was the order of the day. If the men couldn't go through an obstacle, they would go over it. The corps was unprepared, however, for all the challenges that they faced. Swamps of decaying vegetation, called "muskeg", and seas of mud caused by torrential spring rains slowed the progress.

The surveyors tried to circumvent the muskeg, but when this basically proved impossible, they would corduroy the road — corduroying involved chopping trees down and laying them out by hand. It's still a good way to do things today if you're building a mining road.

At this time, it was a time-consuming process, and by June the weather and conditions had taken their toll. Only 95 miles of the highway had been completed in nearly two months. With a sense of urgency on June 3, 1942, the Japanese bombed the military base at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands, causing more than 100 American casualties. The enemy's proximity constantly reminded the men that they were at war and gave them a renewed sense of purpose in their

work. Still hindered by tough working conditions, the builders had completed only 360 miles by the end of June, leaving 1,100 miles left to be built in four months before the winter deadline. The summer weather brought more favourable conditions for construction. Within the month of July alone, the men built 400 miles of highway. With summer came dust clouds, mosquitoes and high temperatures, creating a different kind of discomfort for the men of the Army Corps of Engineers.

The public safety campaign — little did I know until I did a little bit of research into this — the Roosevelt administration began running an equivalent of a press campaign for the construction efforts in Alaska, seeking to convince the public that everything was being done to ensure their safety. A 1942 issue of *Time* magazine described the construction of the highway as a "task befitting Paul Bunyan" and an integral part of the war effort. The road was only one of the northwest defence projects, which also included airstrips, pipelines and extensive telecommunication lines. I know we heard a little bit about that in the House today.

The engineers raced against the clock. By the beginning of September, they had 460 miles left to build before winter set in. The workers ran up against yet another environmental obstacle along the west side of Kluane Lake. This time they were stymied by a long stretch of permafrost, semi-frozen ground that can thaw and turn into mud within a temperature change of a matter of degrees. None of the engineers knew much about permafrost. For six weeks, construction was halted while they improvised solutions for building over it. Eventually the men found that the time-consuming, labour-intensive task of corduroying the road and insulating the permafrost below was their only hope of moving on.

Because of the many delays, winter arrived while construction was still underway. One of the coldest autumns ever recorded in the area brought frigid temperatures that could freeze skin in seconds, putting the highway builders at great risk of hampering their progress. Finally, on October 25 at 4:00 p.m., the final gap of the Alaska Highway route was closed. A ceremony on November 20 officially marked the completion of the Alaska Highway route, opening it to the military traffic.

As a Canadian Ranger, I remember being a part of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alaska Highway. At the same time we had a parade and re-enacted the official opening. I do remember standing there in my Ranger uniform in November, and it was cold. We stood there and stood there as the dignitaries talked. One of things I remember is that — back then I was just a lowly Ranger, I believe, not even a Ranger sergeant. Mr. Speaker, as you know, now that we have become MLAs and speakers and dignitaries, we seem to be up front, eating the good food and stuff like that. I remember that, as a lowly Ranger, we got soup while everyone else ate steak and mashed potatoes. We had set up all of the tents just about in the location where the new Sheep Mountain lookout is. It is just incredible to bring back some of the memories of the Alaska Highway.

The history of the Alaska Highway Heritage Society, I think, is actually pretty interesting, Mr. Speaker. You know, the corridor crosses provincial, territorial, international and cultural boundaries as it winds through northern British Columbia, southern Yukon, and up into Alaska. The corridor's centrepiece is the Alaska Highway and it's over a distance of 2,237 kilometres. It crosses five summits, ranging from 975 metres to 1,280 metres, to serve residents, the tourism industry, forestry, mining, the oil and gas industry, and many other industries. The highway is divided into three distinct sections. In British Columbia it's known as Highway 97, in the Yukon as Highway 1, and in Alaska it's Highway 2. Of course, we all know it runs through diverse natural ecoregions, from the Peace River plains through boreal forests and mountain ranges.

The highway itself was a significant feat of engineering and was recognized as an event of national historic significance in 1954, and as an International Historic Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering in 1996. I believe I have read this before, and I'll say it in the House today, that the United States believes that it rivals the Hoover Dam as one of the top-10 engineering feats in the world over the years.

I just wanted to speak a little bit about some of the things in my riding that are applicable and significant when it comes to this Alaska Highway heritage project — having this identified as a historic site. It doesn't take you very long when you get into the Kluane region — and the rich history of the First Nations is key and pivotal to this coming through to fruition. You know, I have three First Nations — Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Kluane First Nation and the White River First Nation — that really contribute so much along the Alaska Highway. If anybody has had a chance to go to Long Ago People's Place, that's a great opportunity. I know he does a lot of youth camps there, but it's on the old Champagne road and close to the hubcap capital, I believe, of the world. My old buddy, Eddy, has a collection of hubcaps there. But you see little things along the way. There is some dog-mushing stuff in Mendenhall, and Irene's Place is there.

As you move along, you get to something that I think is probably one of the things I'm most proud of that this Yukon Party government has done, and it's our Da Kų Cultural Centre. It's a partnership between the First Nations, the Government of Canada and, of course, this Yukon Party government. I think it's important to realize that right there on that spot we have a little bit of history of the Alaska Highway, a little bit of history of Kluane National Park, and we have great history that they're developing there of the traditional cultures that people can see — tourists can see, locals can see, youth groups can see.

Speaking of Kluane National Park, I think that's a little bit of an anchor tenant in itself. I spoke about Sheep Mountain. You can spend a little time there looking at the sheep in the spring or when they're just walking on the road — or if you get the opportunity to go with some of the glacier

flight companies and have a look at the world's largest non-polar icefield and Canada's largest mountain.

Another thing that we have which is important — and I spoke to it a little bit when I spoke about permafrost and the challenges with engineering — we have the Kluane research centre, we also have the Department of Highways and Public Works and this government does many research projects when it comes to permafrost. The topic of the day is climate change, and I think we see it first-hand in the Kluane area. There's a lot of good research that's going on. I'm talking to some of the folks at the Kluane research centre and some of the people who are looking to come in and develop programs and have a look at what's going on when it comes to the effects of climate change on the north.

The Burwash museum is another thing, right after Sheep Mountain. I'm not sure why, but I'll have to ask the Member for Klondike why we have the largest gold pan in the Yukon in my riding. I'll check with him on that, but the museum is also an incredible place to go to see and visit.

Another thing that's incredible as you work your way up — there are a lot of old highway lodges. Some of them have closed down, but they're still old historic sites. One of the places that is still up and running and has been revitalized is Discovery Yukon Lodgings, and that's the one at White River. If you were to stop in there, it's like going back in history to 1942. They have all the old army vehicles there. It's more of an RV park. Some of the mining companies base out of there — there's a landing strip; there are some wall tents — but it's an old historic — I would encourage anyone who is travelling the Alaska Highway to stop in and see Amanda and Bob and say hi and have a look around.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the best buns on the Alaska Highway at Buckshot Betty's in Beaver Creek. That is true.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk just a little bit about some of the old historic stuff that we have in my riding — the Catholic church being one of them in Haines Junction — but there's also the exact basically mimicked church in Beaver Creek. It's still active and running. I was there the other day for a funeral for a close friend of mine. I think that Catholic church probably gets almost as many pictures, if not more pictures, than the beautiful mountain scenery in the Kluane area.

I spoke a little bit about Soldier's Summit and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I know on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary the community got together and — he has since passed — Al Tomlin had an old military jeep and they had it set up so they could take tours down the old dump road to Marshall Creek and back. Al and some of the seniors would sit on there and read a bit of the history. They had a sound system that was hooked up on it and they did trips throughout the summer.

I know my fellow Rangers and I went down there and built some bridges and did some work on the road. So I look forward to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Minister of Health and Social Services spoke a little bit earlier about when we had the convoy come up, and I was part of that too and it was incredible to see the old military vehicles. I sure hope we can see more military vehicles come up on the 75<sup>th</sup>. I'm already

working on Bill Karman's dad — he had an old jeep and I think it still runs — getting that out so we can have that for whatever parade comes along.

I want to talk just a little bit about the history of the Alaska Highway and some of the other things that go along with it. My grandfather came up after the war and he went to work for the US Army on the eight-inch pipeline that ran from Haines, Alaska, to Fairbanks, which was an effort to get fuel up to the air bases. It's an interesting story. He was in charge of the pipeline and was there for quite a few years. During that time, they had the northwest highway system — and I'm hoping we can re-enact a couple of the old bonspiels at some of the old sites. I have a great collection of northwest highway system pins that are fairly sought after and valuable for pin collectors and curlers.

I wanted to tell a story. I've told this story in Ottawa and I've told this story across the north when it comes to rangers. Five minutes? It's working out perfectly, Mr. Speaker.

Back in the day, in the early 1950s, there used to be a magazine called *The Rangers*. When the ranger program was up and running back then, a lot of DPW employees, northwest highway systems — people that worked on them — were rangers and a couple of notable names — Don Bakke — there's the Bakke family; the Wondgas, Wally Wondga — and there was a story. I might get it pretty much figured out; I wrote it down here. At one point in time in *The Ranger*, there was an article about some fugitives who had run the border at Beaver Creek. They ran the border at Beaver Creek, so Beaver Creek called the RCMP and the RCMP got a hold of some of the rangers — Wally Wondga being Lieutenant Wondga, and Captain Don Bakke. I guess they followed them through Destruction Bay down to the old Sheep Mountain Hotel, which is now just next to Silver City — between Silver City and the Arctic Institute — that area down there. They went in, but didn't cause any trouble there — the two fugitives — so they called Captain Don Bakke in Haines Junction and the RCMP got a hold of him, so they went out just past McIntosh subdivision with two of their graders and had two graders on the road, sideways. They had asked for the assistance of the Canadian rangers and the rangers were there. Basically the end of the article says, "...looking down the business end of 10.303s, the RCMP effected the arrest without incident."

That is just some of the history of the Alaska Highway.

The Minister of Highways and Public Works — I do want to thank him because it was he and I who were sitting around having the discussion about the dedication of the Alaska Highway and I'm very proud of that — as the highways minister, I'm proud to bring it forward so that we can remember, lest we forget.

The Alaska Highway Community Society, which is the BC portion, was who I first engaged with when I was the highways minister, shortly after the Premier had asked me to become the highways minister, and the Alaska Highway Heritage Society. Sally Robinson is phenomenal in her role there — she's great. She sat down, we gave names of Yukoners — old Yukoners — of all walks of life to get the history behind it. In the media release that came out of the

heritage project — and this plays into this 100 percent: "National Historic Sites of Canada tell the story of defining moments in Canada's history, and help Canadians celebrate their shared cultural heritage. The Alaska Highway Corridor should be part of that story; the recognition will provide a platform for promoting the shared history of the Alaska Highway's cultural landscape — especially with the upcoming 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alaska Highway, and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada in 2017."

I do look forward to this coming forward. Moving forward, I sure hope that this comes through to fruition and I already know there is a lot of planning within different departments for celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 150<sup>th</sup>. I know in my community, I have been forwarding funding opportunities and getting local organizations to come up with some ideas on what we can do.

In closing, I do want to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing Motion No. 1047 forward and I will definitely be supporting this one.

**Ms. White:** I'm really excited about today's debate and mine is going to be a little bit different from what we've heard so far today.

Earlier this year I went to visit my grandma in Edmonton, and what made this so different is that I had no agenda except to spend time with my gran. When we slow down and we spend time with seniors and elders, if we're lucky — really, really lucky — stories will flow. I learned things about my grandparents that I had never imagined and today's motion about the importance of the Alaska Highway gave me a reason to call my gran and pump her for more information. In my last phone call this afternoon, she made me promise that I wouldn't be too explicit, so gran, I promise to keep it PG.

My grandpa, Charles Russell White was born in Crosby, Ontario on November 22, 1925 and my grandma, born Reta Ineze MacDonald, was born in Consort, Alberta on April 29, 1929. My grandpa enlisted in the armed forces in 1943 and he lied about his age to be able to do so. My grandma described herself as a city girl and was living in Edmonton in 1946. She and two girlfriends had gone out to a show and on their way home stopped at a waffle joint. There they met two soldiers who offered to walk them home. She said they paired up with her two girlfriends and that was fine. Gran was told that they had a friend arriving the next day and my brave 16 year-old grandma agreed to go on a blind date with the arriving friend. I'm so glad that she did.

After my grandpa enlisted, he went overseas and then he was brought back and he was stationed at Trenton and then after that he was sent to Whitehorse — or Fort St. John first — grandma can't remember those details; they're hazy. In 1948 he went back to Edmonton so my grandparents could get married. They were married on March 17, 1948. Grandpa was 23 and grandma was 18 and they both needed permission to get married, so gran's mom needed to sign the marriage licence. It is pretty interesting because I'm not sure what the age is now.

Grandma pointed out that at that point, from Wonowon onwards, the highway was narrow and it was all gravel. Gran flew up in a civilian plane to join grandpa in the spring of 1949. It sounds like it was a long flight because she said that it stopped absolutely everywhere. She remembers it landing in Fort St. John and Watson Lake and she was sure there were other points in between. She arrived with a small suitcase with very little because she was expecting that her other things would arrive soon, but that spring, there was extreme flooding in BC and the road got washed out. So grandma was stuck with essentially a change of clothes in Whitehorse in 1949. She said that it was a rainy spring because they lived in a shack downtown and when it rained there were 17 leaks in the ceiling, so I can only imagine what that was like. She described downtown Whitehorse as having only one store that was owned by the Hougens, so it's a long time that they've been around. She said that when she was here, she purchased her very first ironing board for \$2 from Hougen's and she's still using it today, so it's travelled around quite a lot.

My dad and his older brother were both born in Whitehorse. My dad was born in 1950 and my Uncle Barry was born in 1949, both in Whitehorse.

I think the really interesting thing about the Alaska Highway is that, just like everybody said, there are so many stories that are associated with it and so many bits and parts of history are along it.

I met a woman who came up to the Yukon to visit Kluane National Park, because when her parents had visited decades earlier, they were so struck by the beauty that they named her after the park. She lived in the southern United States, and her name was pronounced "klu-ain" and she didn't like it because it didn't make any sense to her. She was really surprised when she got to the Yukon to learn that her name was actually Kluane and she liked it much more.

There is so much that is tied into it for people's history — I mean, being able to talk to my grandma about when she lived here and that time is neat. She referred to herself as a city girl, and she said on the first weekend they were here, they walked five miles to Miles Canyon and she describes that she was wearing inappropriate footwear — maybe that was because her shoes hadn't arrived.

My dad was born in Whitehorse; my Uncle Barry was born in Whitehorse — because of them being up for the construction of the highway. They were here for five years before grandpa was transferred to the Wainwright base. Yukon became a place and the Alaska Highway became a really important factor for my grandparents. They drove it countless times and it was a really important thing that they did. My grandpa passed away in 2007 and I think the last time they were up was probably in 2005. The last time my grandma came up on the highway with my dad, they stopped at all the regular haunts and camped along the way.

To be able to get this designation will encourage other people to come, whether it is for historic purposes, whether it is to knock things off a list — and I think that is really important. But I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward because it gave me an

opportunity today to talk to my grandma three times on the phone, and that was fantastic. So I'm going to send this to her. Grandma, thanks for the stories. You did really cool things.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, I want to first off thank my colleague, the MLA for Watson Lake, for bringing forth this really great and very timely motion. Of course, there have been a lot of fantastic stories that have been shared here today. I think that each and every one of us — just like pretty much every one of us who lives in this territory or who has ever lived in this territory — has lots of stories and lots of memories to share about the Alaska Highway over the years.

As a person who was born and raised in Watson Lake, my memories of the highway have really evolved significantly over the years. I do recall making that trip many, many times along the highway from Watson Lake over to Whitehorse and up to Dawson and other communities. Of course, at that time — I know the MLA for Watson Lake had referenced the trip being maybe six or seven hours — I remember it being perhaps maybe eight hours or so, and that's perhaps because we had a few breaks so my father could take a break, have a coffee and perhaps take in a cigarette or two — of course, that was the thing to do at that particular time. I just remember those trips being long and arduous. I remember having to make my father stop along that highway probably every 20 minutes so I could get sick.

Those are not exactly delightful memories; however, the road that I remember being up, down and around, and the gravel and the dirt, and the dust flying in the vehicle and smoke-filled — and perhaps without car seats at that time — how things have changed. I can say that highway has changed a lot — so too have the establishments that find their way along the highway. It really speaks to the point that the highway means so many different things to each and every one of us. It means so many different things to our respective communities along the highway.

I think that's a really great thing about this particular proposed designation to commemorate the highway — to recognize it as an evolving place, what it was and what it is today, and certainly what it will become in years down the road. I think that it is an honorific title. It's not prescriptive. It's not to dictate what can be built or what can't be built along the highway, but it is really commemorating a legacy of the highway and its significance to the development of our territory and, of course, it remains and will continue to remain a very significant corridor for many different purposes — for commerce, for tourism, for growth of our territory.

I am really thrilled to be able to have worked with the actual number of individuals over the years. It was announced on October 27 of this year by the two organizations that the Alaska Highway Community Society in British Columbia and the Alaska Highway Heritage Society in Yukon were pleased to formally submit their nomination as a national historic site of Canada in the category of place, as I referenced earlier.

It has been said here before, but the Alaska Highway — and really, we're talking not just about the highway itself, but the corridor, and everything that it encompasses along that



major corridor, which is a lot. I know that this proposed designation refers to a number of key iconic locations and actual pieces of infrastructure along that corridor, but it is by no means meant to be prescriptive. It's very inclusive instead of exclusive, and so will continue to evolve — hopefully when this designation does take place. We are hoping that it will take place during 2017 and, if we are fortunate, before 2017, before the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the highway. It also coincides with Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> celebration of our country celebrating Confederation. Hopefully, there will be lots of additional opportunities to add other pieces of infrastructure in places and events within the corridor itself.

It's a place that's rich in history. We have already talked about culture, heritage and, as I have already spoken to — and many of my colleagues across the way and on our side of the Assembly have spoken to — great memories. There are many individuals who have and who continue to contribute to what the Yukon is today. We have all borne witness to the challenges of building the highway and to the impact that the highway had on opening up our northern piece of the country.

I want to commend the work and want to congratulate and recognize the work of these two societies in working very closely with each of the communities and the organizations in those communities, with First Nation governments and with municipal governments on building on that strong interest in being able to share the story of the corridor while protecting its key cultural resources. What better way to do that than by proposing this designation.

We are very pleased, as I said, that the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be coming up. I too recall the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the highway. In fact, one of our neighbours at the time in Watson Lake was very instrumental in helping to facilitate a number of various events in the area in commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. There has been a tremendous amount of work that has already been done to share and be able to commemorate the stories, the legends, of those individuals who lived along the corridor over the years and who contributed to the development of our communities and our territory.

In Watson Lake alone — and I see that one of the pieces of infrastructure that is being proposed to be recognized is the Watson Lake terminal building. It's one of six sites in the territory included in the nomination. Likewise there are others — the Sign Post Forest, which has already been alluded to, and others. The Watson Lake air terminal building, however — I wanted to just make a note because the Watson Lake Historical Society — there has been a lot of work done by that particular organization. I think that if anyone has ever had an opportunity to stop at that terminal building — it used to be a very busy hub back in the day and it used to facilitate flights from CP Air and beyond, into what we would call the milk run going into Fort Nelson, and Fort St. John, Grande Prairie and Edmonton and so forth. The terminal building is a beautiful terminal building. It's actually a living museum — is what I would coin it as — because there are so many very historic photos and pieces of infrastructure that have been

identified and that are really commemorated through pictures and interpretive panels throughout that building.

Outside of the property on the original airport site, you will also find remnants of old bombers that have been found in the Watson Lake itself and other pieces of aviation that have contributed to the Watson Lake region over the years. It is a stunning facility. We're very fortunate to have it within our family of facilities. I want to thank the Watson Lake Historical Society for their continued work. I want to thank the officials who have also made an office space available to the society to operate out of that facility.

The thinking is — I know that they are busily working with a number of different stakeholders on interpreting even more so the significance of the airport and the history of the military, both US and Canada, in the past and the development of that community and southeast Yukon.

I am very excited to see that this piece of infrastructure is being recognized — and likewise the famous Watson Lake Sign Post Forest. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that growing up in Watson Lake, one of my three summer jobs would be to work in the visitor information centre. It's also the interpretive centre for Watson Lake. For anyone who has not had the chance to actually take a visit and stroll through that facility and speak to the staff, it is significant and it is very amazing. I remember working there every summer for many years — several years. I would continually receive visitors who had contributed to the highway in some way, shape or form and the photographs that would be shared and left at the centre for others to enjoy was significant. So the library and the archival collection itself just housed within that building was significant.

Of course, the highway was never referred to as the Alaska Highway; it was always the Alcan. So it was just an amazing privilege to have had that ability to listen to those stories over the years and to meet so many people from all over the world whose lives were touched by that building in some way, shape or form. With Carl Lindley from Danville, Illinois, of course, when he erected the first sign — that really started the whole Sign Post Forest. I mean, my goodness, what he would have thought had he known what he was about to start — 70,000-plus signs over the years and the Town of Watson Lake of course has really had to contribute to the evolution of those sign posts and to maintain and contribute. Now that it has been designated as a historic site, it makes it all the more meaningful.

Mr. Speaker, the tourism commercials that we just recently launched for Yukoners to see showcase a number of iconic sites along the Alaska Highway and of course, scenic drives is one of a number of different main pillars within our tourism strategy. Of course there is one scene in one of our summer commercials that will be coming out early next year. It starts with the Watson Lake Sign Post Forest and again speaks to scenic drives in our territory and of course the Alaska Highway sits very prominent.

I know that the former Minister of Tourism and Culture, our Minister of Health and Social Services, has already spoken at great length about the tourism benefits and all of the



various marketing initiatives we have underway. But I did want to make reference to a couple in particular. Over the years, we have found that working with the State of Alaska has been of great value for the Yukon in promoting the Alaska Highway and promoting our two jurisdictions. By really blending our resources and integrating our marketing efforts, we're able to really extend that marketing reach so much more than if we were to do that in isolation.

The Tourism North initiative, which combines British Columbia, Alberta and of course Alaska and Yukon, just recently received an international award by the International Economic Development Council, recognizing the joint efforts of marketing this particular corridor and again, being very strategic in how we reach out to target audiences and how we were able to continue to really mobilize all those various assets along the highway and bring visitors along the corridor.

I can't believe my time is running out already, but I did want to say that, at the same time, it's really critical that we also recognize that the highway was not all about joyous times. We've heard also about the opening of the highway and what that meant for Yukon First Nations and those individuals who lived within the corridor and within our communities over many years before the Alaska Highway came about.

It is interesting that when we look at — and right now as we speak, there is a conference going on, hosted by the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, called Sharing our Stories. Our government is a very proud sponsor, contributor and partner of that conference going forward. It's really all about celebrating what has occurred over the past decade and looking to the future.

Over the last 10 years alone, I know that our First Nation communities have experienced a tremendous cultural resurgence in the territory. The positive outcomes of having various gatherings of Yukon First Nations celebrating their culture, heritage, tradition and art, comprised within major festivals such as the Adäka Cultural Festival and many others that we have recently seen come about — the one that was held over at the Da Kų Cultural Centre in Haines Junction earlier this summer was a convergence of dance and celebration of First Nation performances, history and heritage.

It's fantastic to see that there has been a tremendous resurgence, increased confidence and pride among Yukon's First Nation people, where they are able to celebrate that and utilize infrastructure such as new cultural centres — really an investment in the festivals, investment in our artists and celebrating pride of place — for First Nations to be able to showcase and tell their stories as they should be appropriately done through their respective facilities and through festivals, dance and many different events. I just wanted to make reference to that as well.

In closing, I want to say thank you and congratulate these two societies that have worked very hard over the years. They have brought this vision to fruition. We certainly commend this. There are a few steps ahead over the next year to two years coming up, but I think that, given the amount of community outreach that has taken place and the fact that this is going to occur within the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary — at least we are

hoping so — it does make many compelling reasons why this designation should go forward.

Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the MLA for Watson Lake and commend this motion to the Assembly.

**Ms. Stick:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand here today in support of this motion and thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward because the Alaska Highway truly is an amazing part of Yukon's history.

It seems to me I remember when I was on city council here in Whitehorse that there was talk even back then, before 2005, of the Alaska Highway corridor and how important it was and how we were going to preserve it. So it's good to see that since 2014 the Alaska Highway Community Society of BC and the Alaska Highway Heritage Society of the Yukon have been able to work together and create this team to put forward an application to raise the profile of the Alaska Highway corridor and have it designated as a national historic site of Canada through Parks Canada.

It's good to see that this application has gone through. I'm just hoping that this is just as much a piece of Alaska's history too and that they are able to give comparable designation and protection to the stretch from Beaver Creek to Fairbanks of the Alaska Highway.

Members have spoken a bit about the First Nations and the impacts of the Alaska Highway on that. I just would point out — and to me it was even surprising — the number of First Nations — and I'm sure that if we were to have a map of those First Nations laid out from BC and the Yukon, it would have covered — there wasn't much land in between that wouldn't have belonged to First Nations at the time that the Alaska Highway went through. This of course was before land claims and that type of thing, but I would like to mention those First Nations that were impacted by it. In BC it was the Sauteau First Nation, Chetwynd; the West Moberly First Nation, Moberly Lake; Halfway River First Nation, Wonowon, BC; Blueberry River First Nations, Buick Creek, BC; the Doig River First Nation, Rose Prairie, BC; Prophet River First Nation, Fort Nelson; Fort Nelson First Nation, Fort Nelson; the McLeod Lake First Nation, McLeod Lake, BC; and the Daylu Dena Council of Lower Post. That's the BC portion.

I think when we drive the highway sometimes we don't realize that there are nine First Nation traditional territories that we are driving through. In the Yukon of course we have the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än, Teslin Tlingit Council, the White River First Nation, Kluane First Nation and Liard First Nation. It would be interesting to see a map of those traditional territories and outlines of that to see where the Alaska Highway did cut through those. We have heard people mention — Pearl Keenan and her descriptions — I think many of us have heard that story of people suddenly appearing out of the bush and the equipment and not really understanding what was coming down the road — that literally this was going to be a life-changer and a

community-changer for so many individuals in BC, Yukon and Alaska.

One of my favorite spots is — and I have a few. I have driven it many times. I always like the Aishihik River bridge, which is located at Canyon Creek further up the Alaska Highway. Millions have read the ballad of Sam McGee by Robert Service but we know there was a real Sam McGee. He actually has a very strong connection to that part of the Alaska Highway route because he and his partner were road builders and prospectors back in 1903, and long before the Alaska Highway, actually built a wagon road between Whitehorse and Kluane Lake. At that crossing of what's called Canyon Creek or the Aishihik River, they built a wooden bridge across that.

Later, when the US Army came along, they used some of that trail that those individuals had built back in 1904, and they actually decided not to use the bridge and to use a different one because of the weight of the equipment and the traffic use on it. It has been restored and it still sits there today at Canyon Creek next to the community that is part of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations' territory.

The other piece of the Alaska Highway that there is a link to also — and that I always find interesting — is that it was part of those defences built for the North American frontier, but there was also a great air route that actually followed the Alaska Highway. Airfields were built or upgraded every 100 miles or so from Edmonton to Fairbanks, and that was part of the lend-lease and transferring equipment and weaponry and whatnot to Russia.

It very much followed along the same route as the Alaska Highway, and those airports and airfields were accessible from the Alaska Highway. Of course, one of my favorite air strips along that is the Aishihik airfield at the end of the Aishihik Road. I don't know if many people get up that road. It can be a bit onerous at times. School zone speed is the average speed if you are going the 125 kilometres, which can make it about a four-hour trip, but when you get there, the airstrip is still there. There are still some of the original buildings there from when planes landed or refueled there on their way to Russia.

This is part of that whole Alaska Highway heritage information that I think we need to share. Just in the Yukon, there were 11 airfields stretching from Watson Lake to Snag, Yukon — and we know about Snag because it recorded the coldest temperatures in North America. I would encourage people to take that drive even though the airfield now at Aishihik is on the traditional lands of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

There is a lot of history that involves many parts of the Alaska Highway, and it does need to be celebrated, recognized and protected — absolutely.

It's interesting to be reminded of many of the spots along the way of old lodges, picnic areas or campgrounds that no longer exist but, at one time, they did and made it so much easier for travellers coming up the highway or going down.

When I came to the Yukon 35 years ago, I actually came up the Stewart-Cassiar and only drove from Watson Lake to

Whitehorse the first time, but I have driven out many times in both directions along the Alaska Highway. It is one of my favourite drives. There's a certain part on the Alaska Highway — and I'm not even sure exactly where it is — where there's just a sense of home, like I'm back in the Yukon or I'm back on the road home, and it feels good to know that it's there.

I think the partnership between BC and the Yukon is a very important one and needs to be supported. They're looking for information. Sally Robinson was mentioned earlier, and they are looking for more stories, photos and information that people might be willing to share. They're looking for new places that need to be protected, places that should be recognized along the way.

There is a lot there, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite. I will close on this, because we have a November 30 deadline coming up of the Alaska Highway theme song contest. First prize is \$1,000, so I would challenge the members in the Legislature. I know we have one ringer here who might be able to help us on this, but it would be great to see an Alaska Highway theme song contest come out of this project. It would be great to see if a Yukoner could win that.

I thank the member opposite for the motion today.

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

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to thank all my colleagues here in the House for their support for this motion. I think it has served us all well. With that, I just wanted to say thank you, and I look forward to the 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. Pasloski:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

**Ms. Stick:** Agree.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Mr. Tredger:** Agree.

**Mr. Silver:** Agree.

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

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