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BLUES

Monday, April 20, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Yvonne Clarke

NOTE

This document, referred to as the "Blues", is the preliminary issue of the Hansard of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and has not been edited fully. It may be used as a reference only with the understanding that it will be superseded by the final, edited version, entitled "Hansard", at a later time.

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 20, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Are there visitors to be introduced?
Visitors introduced

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Tourism Week

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I rise today to recognize National Tourism Week and to celebrate the significant role that tourism plays in Yukon. I am a proud Yukoner and extremely proud and grateful to call this place my home.

When I hear from those visiting Yukon — visitors from across Canada and around the world — they share that they tour the North to experience our beautiful landscape, our culture, and our ways of life. In doing so, they contribute meaningfully to our economic resilience.

Tourism is a cornerstone of our economy and a powerful force for connection, understanding, and community well-being. Tourism supports thousands of jobs across the Yukon, from guiding and outfitting experiences to hospitality, transportation, arts, and retail. It generates significant economic activity and accounts for close to five percent of our GDP, helping to sustain local business and create opportunities in communities both large and small.

Beyond these direct impacts, tourism plays a critical role in advancing broader economic development across the territory. Visitor spending circulates through the economy and creates spinoff benefits for suppliers, local producers, and service providers, strengthening the sustainability of Yukon-based businesses. Tourism also supports economic diversification by creating stable, year-round opportunities in sectors such as cultural industries, outdoor recreation, and experiential services. This diversification is especially important in northern and rural communities where tourism is a key driver of employment and entrepreneurship.

But the value of tourism expands far beyond the balance sheet. Tourism in the Yukon is deeply connected to culture particular to the leadership and vision of Yukon First Nations. We have seen strong growth in Yukon First Nation tourism over the last decade. This growth reflects not only increased interest from visitors but the strength, leadership, and entrepreneurship within communities. Yukon First Nation tourism experiences offer visitors the opportunity to learn directly from knowledge-holders,

to engage with living cultures, and to gain a deeper understanding of the land and its history. These experiences are grounded in respect, authenticity, and stewardship, and they play an important role in advancing cultural revitalization and economic self-determination. This work is led by Yukon First Nation operators and community leaders whose vision continues to shape a tourism sector that is uniquely Yukon.

Tourism also contributes to the overall health and vibrancy of our communities. It supports festivals, cultural events, and public spaces that are enjoyed not only by visitors but by Yukoners themselves. It helps to sustain arts and heritage culture, encourages investment in infrastructure and services, and fosters a sense of pride in place.

As the sector continues to grow, so too does our responsibility to guide this growth carefully. In the Yukon, we are committed to ensuring that tourism development reflects Yukon values, aligns with community priorities, respects Indigenous rights, and protects the natural environment that draws people here.

This includes a continued growth of sport tourism, which is playing an increasingly important role in our economy in addition to contributing to community sport programs and infrastructure. From hosting major events to supporting local competitions and outdoor recreation, sport tourism brings people together, showcases our community, and extends visitations across all seasons. These outcomes are made possible through the dedication of many individuals and organizations that contribute to Yukon's tourism and arts sector each day.

From small business owners to front-line workers to community leaders and industry partners, the industry has not only historically sustained economic vitality but has been an employer for all of Yukon. The dedication, creativity, and resilience of Yukon's tourism industries continues to shape the tourism sector and reflects the very best of Yukon and showcases our incredible culture.

I invite all members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing the importance of tourism to our territory not only as a driver of economic growth but as a force that strengthens communities, celebrates culture, and connects people to this remarkable place we call home.

Applause

Justin Ziegler: This week, the world celebrates tourism. Here in the Yukon, we have something particular to celebrate and I'm proud to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition to pay tribute to Yukon's tourism sector and the individuals who make it so special.

Not long ago, I had the privilege of writing the preface of *Terre Boreale* recipe book. As I was putting those words together, I found myself thinking about what travel really means, what it leaves behind in us. We all have our own ways of collecting travel memories. Sometimes they are objects, a colourful mug, or a jar of spices tucked into a suitcase, but the most vivid memories are rarely the ones we pack. They are the ones that stay carved in us. The rainbow after the rain on a mountain hike, the morning dew between our toes sleeping out of a tent, the majestic moose encountered at the bend of a trail — those are the memories that last a lifetime. Tourism is not merely an industry; it is an invitation

to step outside of the familiar to be transformed by a place, by a landscape, and by people and culture.

The Yukon does not offer ordinary tourism. It offers something more precious — wilderness that humbles you, skies that silence you, a scale of beauty that reminds you of how small and how fortunate you are to be alive in it. There is a reason that a single taste, a single smell, or a single photograph can send us rushing back to a moment we thought we had forgotten. Travel does that.

The Yukon creates those moments — quietly, heartfully, unforgettably. To every tourism operator, guide, driver, chef, pilot, and host who welcomes visitors to this territory, thank you. You carry the pride of this land in everything you do; you are building more than an industry; you are building bridges between this place and the rest of the world.

The economic contribution of tourism to our territory is real and significant. It sustains jobs, supports communities, and keeps local culture vibrant. But beyond the number, tourism operators do something that cannot be measured easily. They share what is ours. They open the door to this extraordinary place and say: Come in; look around; this is the Yukon. This is what turns a visitor into a lifelong ambassador for our territory. You are building memories that will last a lifetime, memories that will bring people back, and memories that will make them say to everyone they know: You have to go; you have to see it for yourself. The Yukon is not easily described. It is experienced, it is felt, and that is exactly why National Tourism Week matters here perhaps more than anywhere else, because what we offer visitors is not simply a destination; it is a transformation.

Applause

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal caucus to pay tribute to National Tourism Week. Led by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, this week allows us to celebrate the role that tourism plays here in the Yukon. Every year, people come to the Yukon in all seasons for our mountains, rivers, northern lights, dog sledding, canoeing, and hiking, but they return because of our people.

Tourism is a vehicle for sharing Yukon First Nation culture, advancing reconciliation, and celebrating our arts, music, and heritage. From guides and operators to artists and hospitality workers, the individuals behind this sector bring the Yukon experience to life with authenticity and pride.

I would like to take this time to recognize Josie's Old Crow Adventures, owned and operated by Paul and Bree Josie in Old Crow. Paul is a grandson of the late Old Crow journalist Edith Josie. From dog-sled rides on trails or Saturday kiddie rides on the lake to boat rides to historic sites along the Porcupine River, every outing ends with bannock around the fire and good old Gwitchin stories passed down to Paul from his grandma and other elders.

To my fellow Yukoners, I encourage you to be a tourist at home. Visit unexplored communities, come to Old Crow, check out the visitor centres, talk to the locals, and rediscover the places and stories that make our home so special. To everyone who works in tourism, thank you. Your passion, dedication, and hospitality make the Yukon unforgettable.

Applause

In recognition of Every Student, Every Day

Hon. Scott Kent: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party government and caucus to pay tribute to the Every Student, Every Day funding program. From the ESED website and according to society president Tara Christie, I will quote: "In 2012, community partners and the territorial government came together with a shared vision: to help increase student attendance rates in classrooms. From that collaboration, the *Every Student, Every Day* charitable fund was born.

"Now, more than a decade later, *Every Student, Every Day* continues to deliver positive, tangible results for students across the Yukon. While times have changed and schools are being asked to do more with less, the need to support students has only grown. As an independent charity, we are proud to continue expanding our reach and strengthening our impact through community-led solutions."

Improving student attendance is a priority because when students miss school, they miss important learning opportunities. The issue of student attendance is not only a problem in the Yukon; it is a challenge for all schools worldwide. Many places are trying to better understand and address the complex and contextual reasons for absenteeism and disengagement. Regular attendance helps students to advance their learning and develop healthy work habits and social skills. Ideally, students would not miss school; however, it is important to understand that each student's circumstances are unique and that there are a variety of reasons students may not be able to attend, such as illness, family circumstances, or participation in events outside of school like cultural and harvest activities.

The Department of Education and the Every Student, Every Day program aim to increase awareness about the importance of regular school attendance and for each student to improve their attendance. Since its establishment in 2012, Every Student, Every Day has supported hundreds of attendance projects, with \$2.8 million in funding raised primarily from Yukon businesses, many of which are from the mineral and development sectors, as well as individual donations.

The Every Student, Every Day projects have made meaningful impacts on many Yukon students' attendance and academic achievement. The government looks forward to continuing to support initiatives that support student success. This year, Every Student, Every Day has committed \$300,000 in funding for attendance projects for the 2026-27 school year. We are excited to see innovative solutions come forward from the school communities and see this investment in action for the next school year. The partnership between the department and Every Student, Every Day demonstrates that the business community can promote the success of Yukon students and the development of Yukon's future workforce by supporting locally developed school-based projects.

We welcome and appreciate the generosity of the Every Student, Every Day society, their commitment to funding the program, and their genuine interest in supporting Yukon students in public schools.