

Honoured delegates and guests, it is my pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the House of Commons of Canada to Yukon, my home.

The City of Whitehorse is the major centre of Yukon, being home to almost 70% of its population.

But I can tell you, as someone who has not only run to represent all the people of this beautiful land but has actually run over most of it, that the entire Yukon Territory and all its people have much to offer.

Whitehorse itself is known as the Wilderness City. We have organized a sightseeing trip following the Conference to see some of the area's beautiful wilderness, specifically the spectacular Kluane National Park, and to be introduced to some of the rich culture of the First Nations peoples who have inhabited this region for hundreds of years.

I also hope you will all take advantage of your time here to explore the city. There is an opportunity tomorrow, for instance, to visit the main campus of Yukon College.

Education is fundamental to improving the living conditions of the people of the North, and the College is a central institute helping to address some of the very issues that this Conference is here to discuss.

The College is home to the Yukon Research Centre, the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, and the Northern Institute of Social Justice.

It is producing exciting results and I hope many of you will be able to take advantage of the visit to Yukon College to see for yourselves.

The College is an outstanding centre for education but of course, as many of you know, I am also very keen on keeping the body fit as well as the mind, and Yukon offers wonderful opportunities to keep active.

Whitehorse is home to the Canada Games Centre and the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Centre, as well as being host to numerous events such as the Yukon Quest, the world's toughest sled dog race.

Well, I could go on about the riches of this region, but I will stop there and hope you will forgive my shameless promotion. Needless to say I am enthusiastic about Yukon.

The House of Commons has also shown great enthusiasm for Canada's North, despite there only being three representatives for the entire region.

This is because Canada is a northern land, and the North is a part of all Canadians.

There will be many presentations on Canada in the coming days, but I hope you will all get a chance to talk with us more informally and get a better understanding of Canada's North, just as we look forward to hearing about other perspectives from around the circumpolar world.

Thank you and welcome to Yukon once again.