Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 53	1st Session	36th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, November 2, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.

Whitehorse, Yukon

Speaker: The Honourable Yvonne Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
2026 Fall Sitting

Speaker: Hon. Yvonne Clarke
Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole: Patti McLeod
Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole: Tyler Porter

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Cory Bellmore	Mayo-Tatchun	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Linda Benoit	Whistle Bend South	Minister of Highways and Public Works
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister of Health and Social Services
Hon. Jen Gehmair	Marsh Lake-Mount Lorne-Golden Horn	Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister of Environment
Hon. Scott Kent	Copperbelt South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Laura Lang	Whitehorse West	Minister of Justice; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Women and Gender Equity Directorate; Workers' Safety and Compensation Board
Hon. Ted Laking	Porter Creek Centre	Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Doris Anderson	Porter Creek North	**Yvonne Clarke**	Whistle Bend North
Adam Gerle	Porter Creek South	**Patti McLeod**	Watson Lake-Ross River-Faro
Tyler Porter	Southern Lakes		

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Official Opposition Takhini	**Lane Tredger**	Official Opposition House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Carmen Gustafson	Riverdale North	**Brent McDonald**	Klondike
Linda Moen	Mountainview	**Justin Ziegler**	Riverdale South

THIRD PARTY

Yukon Liberal Party

Debra-Leigh Reti	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Allison Lloyd	Clerk of the Legislative Assembly	**Logan Ockenden**	Acting Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees
Bhreagh Dabbs	Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel	**Joseph Mewett**	Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Karina Watson	Sergeant-at-Arms	**Deana Lemke**	Hansard Administrator

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly

Monday, November 2, 2026

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: Prior to proceeding with the Daily Routine, the Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 88, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike, and Motion No. 137, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition, have both been withdrawn, as they are now outdated.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Are there any visitors to be introduced?

Visitors introduced

Speaker: Tributes.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Statement — National Skilled Trade and Technology Week

Doris Anderson: I rise today to recognize National Skilled Trade and Technology Week, taking place from November 1 to 7. Across the Yukon, tradespeople and technology professionals build our homes and schools, keep our communities running, and support our mining, tourism, and transportation sectors. Their skills and dedication are essential to our territory's success.

As the Yukon grows, so does the need for local skilled workers. For many young Yukoners, these careers can provide a pathway to meaningful employment and a rewarding future while helping their communities thrive.

This week, we celebrate these career paths and thank Yukon tradespeople, technology professionals, apprentices, and the educators, mentors, and employers who support them. Your skills, craftsmanship, and commitment make our Yukon stronger and inspire the next generation.

Statement — 2026 World Broomball Championships

Kate White: Big things are happening this week at the Takhini Arena and the Canada Games Centre as the Yukon Broomball Association hosts the 2026 IFBA World Broomball Championships. I do mean international, with teams joining from India, Australia, Switzerland, France, the United States, and across Canada. The competition will be fierce.

Broomball employs strategies like hockey, while each team has five players and a goalie. The biggest difference from hockey is the offside rule. In broomball, offside is the red line.

Yukon has had a long love affair with broomball, and all winter long, you can hear the highs and the lows of games coming from the covered outdoor rink in Takhini North.

Three Yukon teams are competing in this year's World Championship: the Yukon Bulls, playing in the men's masters division; the Yukon Rampage in the mixed yellow division; and Casino Mining Gold Diggers in the mixed green division. Games start tomorrow morning at 7:00 a.m. and they run straight through until Saturday. There's an opportunity to cheer and volunteer.

Statement — Yukon Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research health summit

Debra-Leigh Reti: November 3 to 4, the 2026 YSPOR health summit will be in Old Crow. Over the two days, there will be conversations about health and well-being, cultural activities like bannock-making, storytelling, and beading, and an elders panel that will share reflections across the three featured communities of Old Crow, Dawson, and Whitehorse.

The Yukon Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. They focus on improving health outcomes in the Yukon with the goal to help improve the outcomes for all Yukon people by learning from those with lived experience. They hire local people from the communities and they provide support and foster collaboration by hosting events like the November health summit.

Màhsi' to everyone involved for your continued good work.

Statement — 2026 World Broomball Championships

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I rise today to recognize the volunteers, organizers, and community partners working to welcome the 2026 World Broomball Championships to Whitehorse. Hosting an international championship is an exciting opportunity to showcase the Yukon to participants from around the world. It's an opportunity for Yukoners to come together, celebrate sport, and demonstrate the hospitality our territory is known for.

To the organizers, sponsors, hosts, and volunteers: Thank you. This event is only possible because of your commitment and generosity. To the athletes, coaches, and officials joining us from around the world: Welcome. We hope you feel the warmth and generosity that this territory has to offer.

I encourage all Yukoners to come out, cheer on the competitors, and be part of the excitement. Admission is free, and a welcoming crowd is one of the best ways we can show our guests what makes this place special. On behalf of my colleagues, I wish everyone a memorable championship. May the competition be strong, the friendships last, and every visitor leave with a story about the Yukon that they will be proud to carry home.

Statement — Indigenous human services diploma graduates

Linda Moen: On behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition, I would like to recognize and congratulate the 14 graduates of the Indigenous human services diploma. This was a partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. This program will help support the graduates in social service careers. The two-year program was just the start for some of the graduates who may continue their education by applying for the bachelor of social work program. This initiative is important, as it helps to address the gaps of social workers needed in the Yukon.

I congratulate the students, as many completed the program while working full-time jobs, raising families, and with other competing factors. Also, thank you to CYFN for championing the

provision of opportunities that address capacity in the communities through education. I wish the graduates continued success.

Statement — Yukon trappers

Tyler Porter: As trapping season begins, I rise to recognize Yukon trappers and the enduring place of sustainable trapping in our territory. For generations, trapping has helped Yukon families earn a living and maintain a deep connection to the land, especially in rural and First Nation communities. Trapping knowledge passes from one generation to the next, carrying with it a deep respect for wildlife and a responsibility to care for the land. Sustainable trapping is rooted in that responsibility: harvesting carefully, using humane practices, and ensuring healthy wildlife populations for future generations.

On behalf of the Yukon Party caucus, I thank Yukon trappers for their stewardship and wish them a safe, prosperous, and successful season.

Speaker: Are there any documents for tabling?

Are there any committee reports to be presented?

Are there any petitions?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 300, *Act to amend the Elections Act (2026)* — Introduction and First Reading

Debra-Leigh Reti: Madam Speaker, I move that a bill entitled *Act to amend the Elections Act (2026)* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party that a bill entitled *Act to amend the Elections Act (2026)* be now introduced and read a first time.

Are you agreed?

Motion for Introduction and First Reading of Bill No. 300 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Kate White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to expand and increase housing subsidies for people who do not qualify for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit, including those who access social assistance or long-term disability and who own mobile homes.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to publicly post complete responses to Yukon Coroner's Service investigations.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Question — Substance use health emergency

Kate White: In 2022, the Yukon first declared a substance use health emergency. Sadly, Yukon families and communities continue to be affected by losses stemming from this crisis. Across the Yukon, there are children grieving the loss of a parent, parents grieving the loss of a child, and a friend grieving the loss of a friend. Entire communities across the Yukon continue to reel from the grief and loss of this crisis. Behind every death is a community member who was valued and loved. Any loss is too much, and in the last few months, there has been an alarming number of deaths.

Does this government still consider the ongoing substance use crisis to be an active health emergency?

Hon. Brad Cathers: We certainly recognize the impact that this has on Yukoners. Whatever you term it, I think it's important that we all recognize the need for further action. There was a period in time, as members will recall from the joint statement issued by the coroner and my colleague the Minister of Justice, that we were fortunate to have a gap for a while in fatalities, but we've seen a recent increase. Certainly, behind every one of those numbers is a person and a family as well as their circle of friends.

We recognize the need for more action on this, and we are focused on working together with community partners and other levels of government on taking additional actions to expand addictions treatment and to improve recovery and aftercare.

Kate White: I thank the minister for his response, but really, it's knowing whether or not this government still supports the substance use health emergency that was declared in 2022.

In August 2023, the Yukon Government and the Council of Yukon First Nations jointly launched the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*. The strategy was intended to be an urgent call to action aimed at rallying together to address the challenges tied to substance use in the Yukon. The strategy was created in collaboration with the Council of Yukon First Nations, the chief medical officer of health, the RCMP, and others. The strategy has 43 recommendations, including actions such as expanding access to safer supply, opening a sobering centre, increasing supports for Yukon First Nations to develop land-based treatment options, expanding access to drug-checking services, and ensuring the availability of opioid agonist therapies like methadone and Suboxone throughout the territory.

Will this minister commit to completing this strategy in collaboration with partners?

Hon. Brad Cathers: I will commit that we will take additional action to improve addictions treatment and to improve recovery and aftercare. What I had asked the department to do was to provide me with an analysis of how well current services are working as well as where we should be prioritizing improvements.

Again, the strategy the member referenced was one done by a previous government, but the approach that I have indicated to the department is to determine what the most effective actions are, so that will include some of the things mentioned in that previous strategy. But I'm not in a position today to speak to exactly which specific actions will be taken, other than to note that we are committed to doing more on addictions treatment, to expanding aftercare, to expanding recovery, and to working as well with NGO partners as well as with other governments on taking additional actions to support people breaking free from their addictions and living healthier lives.

Kate White: That was a disappointing answer, because it sounds like the minister does not support the 2023 strategy put in place just to make sure that people were safe.

The *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* responds to a real pressing need for Yukon to have a coordinated plan to address the ongoing crisis. The strategy was created in conjunction with governments, partners, experts, and stakeholders across the Yukon. The recommendations this strategy puts forward are incredibly important. What they need is to be funded and actioned.

The minister has not committed to this strategy, as we just heard. I'm hoping that he at least has some sort of plan. This is a crisis and it's impacting Yukon families across the territory. When will this government table their plan to address the substance use health emergency?

Hon. Brad Cathers: Again, as the member will recall me mentioning earlier this Sitting, funding from the federal government for mental health and addictions is one of the things that, at the health ministers' meeting, there was a united call from provinces and territories for long-term federal commitment to funding in this area.

We recognize the need for more action. We are committed to doing that. We are working together with NGOs and other governments in considering what steps should be taken. We did not simply abandon work that was underway when we took office. But as I indicated, I have asked department officials to tell me what's working, what may not be working, what can be improved on, and identify what they would recommend as priorities. We've also had discussions with other governments as well as NGOs to hear their perspectives, their priorities, and look forward to making announcements in due course, but I'm not in a position to make specific announcements here this afternoon.

Question — *Residential Tenancies Act* amendments

Lane Tredger: Last week, it became obvious that the Yukon Party's law to change the *Residential Tenancies Act* had effects they themselves weren't expecting. Right now, until their new law comes into force, if you share a bathroom or kitchen with your landlord, you have to be given three months' notice of any rent increases, and increases are limited to one time a year. But because of the way the Yukon Party's changes are written, that protection is going to disappear. As of December 1, if you share a home with your landlord, they can raise your rent without any warning as often as they want.

When we raised this last week, it was painfully obvious that this change was news to the minister. It was clear that the Yukon Party was learning about the effects of their bill in real time on the floor of the Legislature. How did the Yukon Party end up in a situation where they didn't even know what their own law would do?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I'm happy to again address questions regarding the residential tenancies changes that we put forward. We understand that there were changes made and that they weren't working in the private market rentals, as we have seen over the last couple of years. We put these changes forward to the act to increase the supply in the market and find a balance between landlords and tenants. We understand that there are multiple different types of tenant circumstances throughout the *Residential Tenancies Act*, and we think that the changes put forward are a good balance and will make a difference for renters going forward.

Lane Tredger: It's clear that the Yukon Party's removal of protections for tenants who share a home with their landlord was a complete accident. The Yukon Party never said anything public about this effect of their law. The minister didn't bring it up in any of her speeches. It's not in the bill's written description, and when I asked if the bill would have this effect, the minister said no until I pointed her to the exact words that make this change. When asked why this change was being made at all, the minister said, quote: "I think that there are likely reasons for that."

That's unacceptable. Yukoners are losing protections because of this law. They at minimum deserve to have a government that can give a justification for what they're doing, not one that just thinks it's likely that there's a reason. Why is the Yukon Party passing laws they can't even explain?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: The specific tenant situation as addressed in the question from the member opposite is about shared accommodations, and the shared accommodations throughout the *Residential Tenancies Act* have no protections other than the clause that was removed. We were aware of the clause that was being removed, and we were comfortable with the information that was put forward. We do think that these protections and the changes in the act will provide protections for landlords and tenants, and these are necessary in order to make a more healthy, stable, and ongoing housing market in the Yukon.

Lane Tredger: When it became clear last week that the Yukon Party wrote a law without fully understanding what it would do, we asked them to pause. We said they should take some time to consider the consequences they had just learned about, talk to their public servants in the department, maybe even consider consulting with the people who would be affected.

The Yukon Party said no. Even though they just learned about what the law would actually do, they said no, they wouldn't pause; they wouldn't take any time to consider what their law will do to the lives of Yukoners. Pushing through laws without knowing what they do is irresponsible and, frankly, it's incompetent. How can Yukoners have any confidence in the Yukon Party to govern when they're pushing through laws without even understanding what they do?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The NDP should be very familiar with pushing through laws without knowing what they would do. That's what happened in 2021 when they brought forward the flawed rent control policies that they did through the confidence and supply agreement. They learned that the laws weren't going to work the way they had intended in 2023 when the Leader of the Official Opposition apologized to Yukoners for the unintended consequences of their ill-thought-out policies that they brought in 2021 by imposing the ban on no-cause evictions in 2023.

We've seen the NDP flail about on this issue for a number of years. They brought forward a flawed policy in 2021. They tried to correct it in 2023, failed then as well. This entire policy network has been a flawed approach to the housing market in the Yukon. We're attempting to correct the mess that the NDP

made. We're making changes to balance the market out. We're making changes that will support tenants, support landlords, and create a better rental market for all Yukoners.

Question — Addictions treatment for offenders

Debra-Leigh Reti: I have some questions for the Minister of Justice about addictions treatment. The Yukon Party's 2025 election platform referenced a plan to launch a pilot program to expand the options available to sentence offenders to appropriate addictions treatment. When I asked about this commitment in the spring, the minister said it was a priority, but no work had been done. We are now approaching the one-year mark of this government's time in office. Has work been started on this commitment?

Hon. Laura Lang: I have appreciated the previous questions on this, and I can confirm that some initial work has begun. It is not robust enough for me to speak to anything one way or the other. But as we have already communicated, additional treatment options for sentenced offenders who need access to substance use programming and mental health supports is something that our party believed is a priority for the Yukon to explore, as is being done through other jurisdictions like British Columbia and Manitoba. It is a part of a regime that we are eager to ascertain whether or not it would be appropriate for our territory — so, more to come on this.

Debra-Leigh Reti: The Yukon Party promised to work with justice and health care stakeholders to launch a pilot program to expand the options available to sentence offenders to appropriate addictions treatment, mental health care, and aftercare. It's a year into the four-year mandate, and it sounds like very little has been done on the commitment.

These programs have been introduced in different parts of Canada over the last number of years, including Ontario, BC, and Alberta. In most cases, it has involved changes to legislation. Do our laws currently allow for the incarceration of people for the purpose of addictions treatment?

Hon. Laura Lang: As I've just said, this is work that is ongoing right now, and in terms of whether or not we have the legislative framework that will support this, again, it's something that we're exploring right now. Again, I think the issue is that we are investigating because we recognize there are opportunities to improve what our regime currently has. We also know that access to high-quality care for mental wellness and substance use issues contributes to improvements in public safety and community health.

All to say, I appreciate where the member opposite is coming from. I agree that more needs to be done, which is why we're looking into this.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Given the seriousness of our drug crisis, it may be worth exploring this type of program here in the Yukon. Unfortunately, it sounds like we are some time away from it actually happening. When will the government be bringing legislation to this House to implement this commitment, and when would the program be up and running?

Hon. Laura Lang: What we're talking about is how other jurisdictions are approaching involuntary treatment. What we're not talking about is what's already in play within our jurisdictions. That includes pre- and post-charge offenders' access to the integrated restorative justice unit, the Justice Wellness Centre, and the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and programming that is offered through the centre as well as Yukon Community Corrections. We also support eight First Nation community justice programs, which include on-the-land healing, restorative justice options, cognitive skill building, and reintegration support.

Again, we are currently looking into the programs that are offered in British Columbia, Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario, as well as outside of Canada into jurisdictions such as Massachusetts and Sweden. Again, once I have more information, I'll be happy to bring it to the floor for consideration.

Question — Yukon firearms advocate

Carmen Gustafson: Many Yukoners have questions about the creation of a new firearms advocate role. In the "what we heard" report, several priorities for the role were suggested by Yukoners. The minister has repeated that one priority will be advocacy to oppose the federal Assault-Style Firearms Compensation Program. This was supported by 67, or about 25 percent, of the respondents. In comparison, 50, or 18 percent, of the respondents indicated opposition to the position altogether. There were 20 additional respondents who said that they would like to see the advocate work on increased firearm restrictions or bans and reduced firearms ownership. Another 15 Yukoners felt that the priority should be domestic violence, mental health screenings, and background checks.

The minister has said the advocate will work on behalf of all Yukoners. How will this position balance these competing and sometimes inconsistent priorities?

Hon. Laura Lang: It's a very reasonable question from the member opposite. I agree; there's a lot to consider when we're talking about responsible firearms use, and that includes diverse opinions. As I have already said in this House, we are open to hearing varied perspectives from all Yukoners.

However, the point of the firearms bill is, as stipulated in our mandate and in our platform, that we are here to represent what we are hearing from Yukoners as it relates to firearms and the firearms programs that are being put in place by the federal government without any consideration to our northern identity and our northern way of life. As we've already committed to in our mandate and in our platform, we will be proceeding with this bill that represents the voice of Yukoners.

Carmen Gustafson: Last week, I asked the Minister of Justice if she could give me a number or even a range in terms of how much this position would be paid, but she was not able to. When asked how much money would come out of the Department of Justice's budget to begin the advocate's work, she said — quote: "…it's a hypothetical question that I have genuinely not put any true effort into looking into my budget for that. If this bill does pass, then I will take a look at that." She was also unable to indicate what sort of qualifications this position would require.

These are not hypothetical questions. This is a real bill allowing the government to hire a real person who will need to be paid real money. Yukoners deserve more clarity about how their tax dollars will be spent now, before the bill passes. What

is the expected range of compensation for the firearms advocate position, and what qualifications will be required?

Hon. Laura Lang: As I've already said to the member opposite and to our colleagues within the House, those are details that will come following the passage of the bill.

As I've also already clarified, the firearms bill is a framework which we will build from. What I'm being asked about are operational details which we will move into, including the budgeting component, which will be part of the appropriation act in the spring of 2027 which this Assembly will debate. Again, details of this program will be coming forward, as with any bill, on the operational side in the appropriate due course. But that's not the point of what we're doing right now.

Carmen Gustafson: It is of concern that the minister is asking us to pass legislation that creates a paid position without any understanding of what that will cost Yukoners. Given the current fiscal constraints, legislators should be especially prudent when it comes to potential new spending. It's not just compensation for the advocate that concerns Yukoners; a new role will have other expenses as well. The minister has been unable to provide any additional information and has said instead — quote: "… we will learn as this position evolves what is actually needed by the position."

While the minister may not have put her mind to the cost of an independent office of an advocate, Yukoners can imagine the position will need at a minimum an office, supplies, a computer, as well as a travel budget so the advocate can go do some lobbying in Ottawa. This may also require support staff. What expenses for the firearms advocate will the Department of Justice be responsible for?

Hon. Laura Lang: I think those are very reasonable questions to be asked once a bill is passed. I can speak to that, because there are many examples of other legislation that contain very similar provisions. As an example, the coroners, the registration of lands title, the sheriff, the public guardians, and the trustees are positions that are set out in legislation that have it so that the positions provide powers and duties of those statutory offices. But it doesn't set out what the budget is, an explicit job description, who that position is going to be meeting, et cetera. Those are operational details. I'm very happy to have those questions answered in a more complete way once this bill passes.

But again, the purpose of this bill is to set a framework. That is what we're doing over the course of the next couple of days, and I look forward to questions around the actual bill.

Question — Peak smart program and electrical grid reliability

Doris Anderson: With energy challenges and affordability top of mind for Yukon families, my constituents are wondering what the government can do to strengthen our electricity system while helping households save money.

Can the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources tell the House about what his government is doing to not just focus on supporting the electricity grid but also to support affordability?

Hon. Ted Laking: Quickly, I'll just let the member know about the peak smart program that will help reduce a household's energy use. These smart thermostats and hot water tank controllers will not only help the grid by reducing demand on the grid during peak times, but they'll also help families save money.

Today, I'm happy to announce that our government is making it easier and more rewarding for Yukon households to participate in peak smart with up to $1,600 in upfront incentives and an additional $100 every year for eligible households. We are now covering 100 percent of eligible purchase and installation costs for smart thermostats and hot water tank controllers up to $750 per device. Households can also receive a $50 sign-up incentive for each eligible device type that they enrol. Again, that means a household participating with both devices can receive up to $1,600 when they join plus $100 annually for continued participation. At a time when affordability matters to Yukon families, these incentives help remove upfront costs while rewarding households for helping strengthen our electricity grid.

Doris Anderson: These new incentives represent meaningful financial support for Yukon households, but they also serve an important purpose for our electricity system. Can the minister explain how expanding peak smart will help improve the reliability of Yukon's electricity grid?

Hon. Ted Laking: Peak smart helps reduce electricity demand during the coldest winter days when our grid is under the greatest pressure. More than 1,000 Yukon households are already participating, more than double from a year ago. Together, these households are helping reduce peak electricity demand by more than 200 kilowatts.

By using smart thermostats and hot water tank controllers, participating households are helping shift electricity use away from periods of highest demand. Every kilowatt we can shift away from those peak periods helps improve reliability and make better use of our existing infrastructure. By expanding participation further, we can build on that progress while providing meaningful financial incentives directly to Yukon families. This program not only saves households money and gives them incentives; it supports grid stability.

Doris Anderson: Reliable and affordable electricity will continue to be important as our population and economy grow. We know the Yukon needs both immediate action to reduce pressure on our electricity system as well as long-term investments to meet growing demand. Can the minister explain to the House how peak smart fits into the government's broader approach to meeting Yukon's future energy needs?

Hon. Ted Laking: There is no single solution to Yukon's electricity challenges, which is why our government is focused on increasing supply, managing demand, and strengthening reliability. These new peak smart incentives are part of our dependable grid program that was launched this spring as part of the budget. The dependable grid program will help reduce peak winter demand and improve affordability.

We are also advancing the winter reliable energy plan to identify investments, programs, and policies needed to meet Yukon's long-term energy needs. At the same time, we are taking decisive action to strengthen Yukon's energy system by advancing the Whitehorse Power Centres project and moving forward with critical upgrades to the Mayo hydro facility.

These efforts will help provide dependable winter electricity capacity while improving how we manage the power we already generate. Our approach is about taking practical action today while building a stronger, more reliable, and affordable electricity system for the future.

Question — Community medevac services

Brent McDonald: For rural Yukoners, access to an air ambulance begins well before an aircraft even leaves Whitehorse. Someone qualified in the community must be available to assess the patient, recognize the urgency of the situation, and initiate an air ambulance response. Staffing shortages often leave rural communities without nurses for extended periods.

During temporary health centre closures, residents were directed to call 911 in an emergency. But calling 911 is only the first step. When a rural community has no nurse on site, who is authorized to assess the patient and request an air ambulance?

Hon. Brad Cathers: I appreciate the member's question. As the member will recall, I would remind him that we were proud to roll out rural 911 services a decade ago. That allows 911 calls to come into EMS dispatch in Whitehorse. They then make the determination about where that is most appropriately routed. If there are specific issues where there have been problems, I would be happy to look into those.

We do recognize the importance of having first responders in place and recognize that for communities overall, any reduction in the availability of nurses at the health centre can have an impact on the need to call a medevac in the first place — if care is not available locally. That is one of the reasons, as members will recall, that we recently announced that the Working Together federal funding that we've agreed to a four-year extension on with the federal government will include additional funding for community nursing with the intention of addressing coverage gaps and ensuring better coverage in rural Yukon.

Brent McDonald: The former government signed an air ambulance contract worth approximately $157 million over 10 years. The new contract took effect this past April and promises 24-hour coverage and reliable emergency transportation for rural and remote Yukoners. This government is now responsible for overseeing that contract and tracking how the service performs. Rural requests may be delayed or cancelled because of weather, aircraft availability, runway conditions, or other operational issues. Tracking these delays will help Yukoners understand how the service is working and what improvements may be needed.

How many air ambulance requests have been delayed or cancelled since the contract began, and how is the minister using that information to improve the service?

Hon. Brad Cathers: The new contract has been in place since April 1. I do have some data on EMS responses to this point in the current year; however, I'm not in a position right now to be analyzing the exact impact of any particular events, including weather. I don't believe I have that information at my fingertips. Of course, we do recognize that if weather impedes the ability for a plane to land, that can be a serious problem. The government and Alkan Air do make best efforts to avoid situations where they're not able to respond. But there are times where, for the safety of everyone involved, including air crews and patients, it's not possible to land in certain weather conditions.

Brent McDonald: An air ambulance cannot safely reach a patient unless the flight crew has reliable information about the conditions at the destination. Snow, ice, poor visibility, vehicles, wildlife, or other hazards can make a runway unsafe. Some airports do not have staff continuously on-site to address those problems or prepare the runway before an emergency flight arrives. Rural Yukoners need to know how medical help will reach the patient and how the patient will be transported to care. When an air ambulance cannot safely land in a rural community, what is the government's backup plan for reaching that patient and transporting them to care?

Hon. Linda Benoit: I thank the member opposite for their question. Most rural communities do have staff available on call to go do runway surface condition reports or maintenance staff who can go and provide some weather. In the case of a lot of communities where the runways are being cleared by highway staff, the priority for those staff is to ensure that the highway is completed before the runway is. There are conditions in which an ambulance would be best to respond in periods of heavy snow.

Question — Response to Child and Youth Advocate reports

Linda Moen: The Child and Youth Advocate's 2025–26 annual report shows a high number of issues in education. Attendance was the most common education issue brought to the advocate's office. The problem is even more serious in rural schools. This is not a new concern. In the spring, the government tabled student data that said it would be used to set targets for improvement. What is the department's target for reducing chronic absenteeism this year, and what has been put in place in schools to meet it?

Hon. Scott Kent: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. When it comes to student attendance, members will be aware of the Every Student, Every Day initiative that is a private-sector-led funding initiative but asks individual school communities to apply for specific things to assist them.

I think there are other things that we need to address in the curriculum when it comes to ensuring that students have the courses that keep them interested and engaged when it comes to the learning that they need. I am currently working with the Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture on skilled trades and training initiatives when it comes to our public schools. There are a number of initiatives that we need to continue to advance when it comes to ensuring students can be active and engaged in our schools and that the attendance numbers improve as a result of that.

Linda Moen: It would be nice to see those 78 days reduced in rural Yukon schools.

The advocate's report Undercurrents: Implementation of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy in Yukon

Education was tabled last spring. It found some deeply concerning gaps in the implementation of the sexual orientation and gender identity policy. The report found that 2SLGBTQ+ students were at risk of bullying, harassment, violence, negative mental impacts, and more.

To date, the minister has only said that the SOGI school procedures template was under review. While this review is underway, how is this government ensuring that all schools are upholding the requirements of the SOGI policy and keeping students safe?

Hon. Scott Kent: We appreciate the report that the Child and Youth Advocate conducted that was entitled "Undercurrents" regarding the SOGI implementation. The Department of Education provided a response to the Child and Youth Advocate report on June 30, 2026, as was required in the report. Department staff are continuing to review the report's recommendations and identify actions to strengthen support for our students. The department as well continues to support inclusive learning environments and implement SOGI-related policies and practices. As I mentioned, we do appreciate the advocate's thorough review of our ongoing work to implement the SOGI policy across all Yukon schools.

Just last week, senior officials from the Department of Education met with the Child and Youth Advocate and her deputy advocate and talked about this and some of the other reports, and we'll continue to provide updates to those reports as mandated on an annual basis.

Linda Moen: No student should have fear in attending school. In April, the minister tabled the Child and Youth Advocate's report *Close to Home: A Yukon Approach to Supporting Children with Complex Needs*. One of its recommendations was to establish a multi-departmental complex case committee.

The advocate's annual report described a case study of a child with a complex medical diagnosis who was eventually able to get the supports they needed. However, that only happened because Education and disability services were pushed by the advocate to collaborate on one child's case. There are at least 24 children who need this government to fulfill the promise of interdepartmental coordination.

Has the minister established the multi-departmental complex case committee recommended in the Close to Home report, and if not, why not?

Hon. Scott Kent: The department provided a progress report update to the advocate on actions taken and work underway on January 13, 2026. It was that progress report that the member opposite is likely referring to that was tabled in the Spring Sitting.

Education and Health and Social Services continue to work together to improve support for students with complex needs and their families. Departments are working to strengthen coordination of services and supports for students. An example of additional staff who have come on board is the hiring of two registered nurses by the Department of Education to be deployed throughout schools to assist students with complex medical needs.

There are a number of other initiatives that are being undertaken, and I'll continue to work with my colleague the Minister of Health and Social Services to implement and strengthen the coordination of services and supports for those students.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Scott Kent: Madam Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 11, *Yukon Firearms Act — continued*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Yukon Firearms Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Yukon Firearms Act*.

Hon. Laura Lang: I welcome again to the Legislative Assembly my Deputy Minister and Deputy Attorney General, Mark Radke, and the Director of Policy and Communications for the Department of Justice, Drew MacNeil, and, of course, I welcome the member opposite's family who is here in the Legislative Assembly. I can confirm that your daughter certainly keeps me on my toes, so I trust this will be a good debate and it will lead to well-thought-out legislation and more particularly a well-thought-out approach to how we implement this if it does pass. Thank you again, and I look forward to continued debate.

Carmen Gustafson: I was just going to go back to the question that I asked last week before we ran out of time.

I'll just restate that question again, and that was: From the engagement with municipalities, organizations, and First Nations, can the minister please share if any comments or suggestions were received that indicated whether the role of the advocate was a priority issue for them? So, not whether the opposition to the federal assault-style firearms program was important or improving gun safety in general, but whether this specific role and legislation is a priority?

Hon. Laura Lang: I think, as we all know, in the "what we heard" report, there is a semblance of opinions that are presented,

and that includes 45.5 percent of those who responded to this specific survey who concluded that this approach meets the expectations; 8.2 percent has conditional support. We also know that there are a number of Yukoners who also were unsure at that point, and, of course, there are Yukoners who voiced opposition.

Overarchingly, what we have heard for years from Yukoners is complete opposition to what the federal government's approach is to firearms. Period.

What we also know with this bill is that both taking it to Yukon Forum and then subsequently meeting with interested chiefs, we agreed with the understanding that while the principle for which we are proposing in theory sounded fine, they had not seen the bill. Seeing the bill was an important part of being able to say one way or the other whether or not there was actual: Yes, I support the contents of this bill. The bill has now been tabled, and so I look forward to having those conversations.

Noting again, the role of the advocate is but one component of an overarching recipe which we discussed last week that we will be using as a territory to apply to the federal government's approach.

Carmen Gustafson: In debate last week as well, the minister said that Yukoners have concerns about the programming approach on firearms with the federal government. She reiterated it right now, talking about complete opposition to the federal government's approach on firearms — beyond the Assault-Style Firearms Compensation Program, I'm assuming — and the need to have Yukon voices present in any kind of debate with the federal government.

But could the minister clarify what she means when she says that Yukoners are in complete opposition to the federal government, and if it's other gun control legislation and policies that are the problem, could she specify what those problem areas are, please?

Hon. Laura Lang: During the Committee of the Whole speech, one of the things that I noted right off the start was that our government and all Yukoners that I have spoken to absolutely support any federal initiative aimed at reducing the criminal use of illegal firearms, preventing gang violence, and stopping the smuggling and sale of illegal firearms. I've not heard a single Yukoner say that's a bad idea. In fact, what I've heard Yukoners say is that those are very good policy objectives which the federal government should be following through on.

The problem is that, while there is that desire to see enhanced public safety and effort within this realm, what we're doing is instead creating a program that is targeted at responsible firearms users. Many Yukoners over many years have raised an issue with exactly that. That policy response does not respond to the original policy objective which I just outlined.

In addition to that not working well together, we also know that the Yukon voice — the northern voice across the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut — our northern voice has not been part of how these programs are being established. What Yukoners are looking for are opportunities to see an increased federal awareness of: Why do firearms matter in the Yukon? Why is it that we use firearms in the way that we do as it's related to subsistence harvesting, on-the-land safety? As I've said earlier in our debates, these are elements that do require federal consideration as they think through the objectives of any of the federal programs.

I would suggest that Yukoners in general are saying: Hang on, federal government; while your original premise is fine, how you're going about it is not okay, and we're looking for that meaningful consideration for the North for which we have not just done so through letters to the federal government as a territory but is also demonstrated through our letter through the three territories to the federal government asking for other considerations for the North.

Carmen Gustafson: Just to remind the minister, the question that I asked was about other legislation, policies, programs outside of the assault-style firearm legislation. We understand that we've kind of gone over that one a number of times, but are there other approaches to federal gun control that are offensive to Yukoners that the minister is talking about?

Hon. Laura Lang: I think overarchingly, it's about the assault-style firearms program, which is the reason that our bill is here. But we do know that there have been federal programs in the past that have not worked out well for many Canadians. I gave the example last week of the long-gun registry, which is now, of course, no longer.

But again, it's about how we are including the North in these federal decisions, and this is yet another example of really taking time by our federal colleagues to come to the North and actually learn what our reality is like. Our interest, of course, is to see the efforts by our federal colleagues targeting policies that are directed toward criminals, illegal guns, illegal use of guns, and not people who are following the law.

Carmen Gustafson: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I appreciate what the minister is saying, and I understand that she seems to believe that there's a sort of line between a criminal and a non-criminal gun owner. But the fact of the matter is that sometimes lawful firearms are used for unlawful purposes, and actually, when she's talking about a northern context, firearm-related intimate-partner violence is far more frequent in rural areas, especially in the rural North. Of female victims of firearm-related violent crime, 25 percent are victimized by a current or former intimate partner, and in rural settings, firearms are the most common method to murder an intimate partner, and they're also the most common way to kill children.

It is important that when we're talking about the overall programming or firearms legislation and things that the federal government does, she brought up the long-gun registry. I remember at the time the debates in the Gustafson household about that, and last night, we were sort of reminiscing about how it seemed ridiculous at the time that you wouldn't carry your guns around in that rack in your truck anymore and that we would have to put them in gun cases locked away so that children or other people didn't have access to guns.

Certainly, gun control in Canada does have a controversial history, but things have been done in order to address those kinds of cases and to keep people safe. My concern here is that the advocate does start to take positions on gun control that are not generally supported by the Yukon public.

Are there other areas, again, outside of the Assault-Style Firearms Compensation Program that the minister thinks are a concern that the advocate would need to work on?

Hon. Laura Lang: Once the advocate is appointed, that advocate, with direction from me, would then determine how to go about hearing actual concerns from Yukoners, and that information would then come forward.

Again, I think we're getting a bit too far into the operational components, but aside from trying to answer that question, I think it's very important that I convey the intention of this act is not to diminish concerns of gun violence at all but to protect responsible firearms owners and their use of legally acquired firearms property both in the Yukon but also as a way of how we live in the North.

Not only are we choosing to do work quite diligently on this, as the bill is in front of us, we continue to work closely with the federal government and the RCMP to respond to concerns around violent crimes bolstered by an increased budget this 2026-27 fiscal year, which also saw an accommodation of two new positions for the crime reduction unit and a detachment constable position in Whitehorse.

In addition, we focused attention on prevention efforts, including youth-focused and early intervention initiatives, which are supported through the Youth Justice Panel, the Youth Achievement Centre, the gun and gang violence action fund, and supported initiatives delivered by Boys and Girls Club of Yukon. Again, in no way are we supporting or diminishing concerns of gun violence, but again, I believe I've outlined how we are also demonstrating that we do not support that.

Carmen Gustafson: Again, one of the priorities that was identified by people who responded to engagement was either in programming or in advocacy for handguns and wilderness carry.

Is this something that is anticipated — that the advocate would be advocating for more people to have access to handguns and for wilderness carry?

Hon. Laura Lang: That is certainly a concern that we have heard both in our recent engagement as well as over the years. But again, the advocate has not been put in place, as this bill is yet to pass. Once the bill is passed and the advocate is put in place, we will determine what those priorities will be for the individual.

Carmen Gustafson: The minister talked about sort of a uniqueness of how Yukoners use firearms. With respect, I can only think of a few things that firearms are really useful for. Could she clarify what she means when she's talking about how Yukoners use firearms in different ways from other places? How does the use of firearms differ in the Yukon from other places?

Hon. Laura Lang: I think the point here is that, again, firearms are used, I agree, for usually very specific purposes. But in the Yukon, they're used for those specific purposes by a larger number of people. Many Yukoners are on the land, many Yukoners hunt, and many Yukoners depend on hunting as a key component of their subsistence lifestyle. Many Yukoners use that as a way to offset affordability concerns, as an example. We're seeing increased interest within Yukoners to continue to find that as a mechanism to offset their affordability concerns. In fact, I was just hearing from somebody who has not hunted in a number of years and chose to go out moose hunting this fall as a way to ensure that their freezer was full of meat in a way that did not require going down to the store to buy a steak, as an example.

Again, while hunting is part of what Canadians do in the Yukon, we know this is part of the North that we celebrate. We get excited. There is community connection and culture around this, and we know that people plan out their areas with great secrecy of where they go onto the land, and I don't suspect that is going to be changing anytime soon.

Carmen Gustafson: The minister may be surprised to hear that's exactly how people in other parts of Canada use firearms as well. She's also talked about how this is part of the Yukon's culture and that the Yukon's culture needs to be considered when talking to the federal government about firearms.

How is this different from other parts of Canada? What is distinct about the Yukon as compared to other rural or northern jurisdictions in terms of firearm use?

Hon. Laura Lang: One of the aspects that are unique to the Yukon is that we actually have the most PALs per capita in Canada, and we are expecting that this is going to continue to increase as we draw attention to that aspect of firearms use.

We also know that traditional activities like hunting, trapping, and being on the land are not just recreational; they are core parts of our northern culture, our livelihoods, and in many Yukon communities, integral to meeting survival and nutritional needs. Again, as I've already said, firearms support safety on the land during many of these activities.

Supporting lawful and responsible Yukon firearms owners is a key mandate commitment, and advancing this legislation reflects views shared by many Yukoners during not just this most recent public engagement but through our door-knocking and over the last number of years in our engagement with Yukoners on this very subject. I would suggest that, again, this is part of what our Yukon identity is, as I've explained in a number of different ways, and I hope that suffices the answer.

Carmen Gustafson: I appreciate that hunting is important to a number of people. I think in the recent report from the Department of Environment, about 13 percent of Yukoners are licensed hunters, and I understand the importance of hunting as a way to increase food security and address affordability costs. But I don't know that the use of firearms in hunting in the Yukon is significantly different from the use of firearms for hunting in many other parts of Canada where people similarly rely on hunting.

Going to a different area, we talked last week about a difference between the legislation before us and what the governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan have done with their legislation. Can she explain why the choice was made to create a firearms advocate instead of a territorially appointed firearms officer similar to what was done in Saskatchewan and Alberta?

Hon. Laura Lang: Thank you, and I appreciate that for both Alberta and for Saskatchewan, as provinces, they have the ability to do things that are different than territories do, and that includes the ability to appoint a Chief Firearms Officer. We cannot do that, and so what we chose to do was develop something that was designed to reflect what the Yukon is able to do and reflects our lawmaking powers and authority.

Carmen Gustafson: Thank you for that answer. I appreciate that.

With respect to the firearms safety part of the role of the firearm advocate, is it anticipated that there's something that the advocate will be able to do because of the powers or the functions or how they're created in this legislation? Is there something that the advocate will be able to do that others cannot with respect to firearms safety?

Hon. Laura Lang: As I've already answered in this House, when this bill was first contemplated and subsequently designed, we did not have a northern CFO, and I am very thankful to the federal government for hearing our concerns as three territories that this is a position that we certainly do see the need for, and I'm thankful to have it positioned outside of Whitehorse.

I've also already commented on both the role of the advocate as well as the role of the CFO, and, of course, they both have an interest in firearms safety, and I suspect that they will be working together. The function of the CFO is under a different piece of legislation, which is federal. The function of the advocate is far more grassroots and is part of the Yukon's voice.

As I've already also communicated, the firearms advocate is a territorial position appointed by the Minister of Justice. The federal position is required by law in all Canadian jurisdictions and appointed by the federal Minister of Public Safety. The firearms advocate will be funded by the territorial government. The CFO will be funded by the federal government.

In terms of their actual responsibilities, the CFO is responsible for the administration of the federal *Firearms Act* and overseeing firearms licensing, eligibility, and safety in their jurisdictions. Another responsibility is the authorization to issue and revoke licences, authorize transportation and carrying of restricted or prohibited firearms, and approve shooting ranges.

The advocate, on the other side, is a position that will be there to support and communicate on behalf of lawful Yukon firearm owners, responsible firearm users, and Yukoners in general. It really is that grassroots voice to understanding and hearing what people are talking about and bringing that voice to me. The CFO will not be bringing that voice to me but advising both myself but also my colleagues on firearms issues as well as supporting that voice at other tables outside of our jurisdictions.

Carmen Gustafson: The question that I was asking was with respect to firearms safety and how the firearms advocate role is going to address firearms safety, which was something that people are generally quite supportive of.

Maybe I'll ask a different question, and that's whether Yukon Government already provides any resources currently to educate people about firearm safety.

Hon. Laura Lang: One of the components of excitement we heard during the engagement was that a large number of Yukoners were interested to see greater emphasis on firearms safety courses, specifically within schools. Right now, we know that we do provide the hunter education and ethics development course that Yukoners who are going out hunting, in addition to their PAL, should have this hunter education and ethics development course.

One of the things I'm particularly excited about and I've spoken at great length with my colleagues and Yukoners about is how we can empower youth to have greater connection to accessing both the HEED but also just general safety in the firearms courses. This is an area that I hope to be working on with the Minister of Education to explore: Is this even an option for our territory? What is happening in other jurisdictions? How do the other two territories do it? I know that there have been some initial conversations with both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories on potential sharing of information in this area.

But again, I couldn't agree more if the question is: How is this position going to be educating Yukoners more from a safety perspective? I would suggest that would be one of the key priorities I would suspect we would be looking to see this person take on.

Carmen Gustafson: The HEED course is one of those places, and I do believe that course is offered within some courses through Department of Education already.

How does having an advocate position change that or change the availability of those courses?

Hon. Laura Lang: The simplest way to answer this question is to say it's another voice that is being brought to firearms and ensuring that safety and responsible use of firearms is at the forefront of what it is that we're doing in terms of our consideration for additional safety courses.

In addition to the HEED being a component of our opportunity within the education system, I would not offer that perhaps it is done in every single school. I don't know that actually, and I look forward to working with my colleague the Minister of Education to better understand what the uptake on HEED has been, how there could be improvements to the course, and how we could see additional types of courses as spinoffs to that if at all necessary.

I recall when I took my PAL, as an example, I certainly came out of it feeling knowledgeable in some areas, but there are always opportunities for learners to learn additional components. Maybe we explore that. Again, it's about opening up opportunities and looking at it from: How do we continue to improve and do better for Yukoners? I'm looking forward to the advocate offering some of those opportunities.

Carmen Gustafson: Is it anticipated that the advocate would be qualified and trained to actually offer some of those courses and provide some of that training?

Hon. Laura Lang: That is a detail that will come following the passage of this bill.

Carmen Gustafson: During the engagement process, the "what we heard" document said that there was an emphasis on hearing particular voices. For example, the minister and Premier visited a gun show and held a private Q&A for firearm groups as part of their engagement. In that engagement, did those firearm owners suggest any priorities with respect to firearms that wouldn't be addressed by the creation of a firearms advocate?

Hon. Laura Lang: Don't really know what the question is from the member opposite, but I can confirm that Yukoners are supportive of the intent of the advocate in general, if that answers the question.

Carmen Gustafson: No, I was curious if there were any other priorities that fall outside of the role of the advocate — range access, access to legal gun ranges being one of them — and I understand there's difficulty getting access to the range for a lot of folks, particularly in Whitehorse.

Did the RCMP provide any feedback on the firearms advocate position or on priorities related to firearms?

Hon. Laura Lang: Yes, I did receive a letter from the RCMP who acknowledged awareness of the work that is underway.

Carmen Gustafson: I noticed that in the legislation, there's no specific mention of licensing or promoting firearms licensing, and so I'm curious why the decision was made to omit that from the legislation.

Hon. Laura Lang: I have already spoken to this when I outlined the differences between provinces and territories and their abilities to create bills, and for our territory's purpose, the advocate does not have that authority. That falls to the Chief Firearms Officer.

Carmen Gustafson: Sorry, I should have clarified. I didn't mean in terms of having authority for issuing licences but rather promoting the PAL or licensing or coming into compliance with existing legislation, similar to the way that safety is referenced in the legislation.

I'm wondering why licensing or promoting licensing was not included in legislation.

Hon. Laura Lang: I believe that this has actually been outlined under the functions and powers — if I look at section 3(1)(d), "… promoting public safety respecting firearms, including by providing, or facilitating the provision of, education respecting firearms use, ownership and possession."

Carmen Gustafson: Fair enough. I agree that could fall under that provision. It was merely that I was surprised not to see any reference to licensing in there.

Another part of the advocate's role is engagement with public officials. The minister, in previous debate, talked about some of the people or some of the officials or organizations that the firearms advocate would advocate to and for.

I notice that in the legislation, there's no mention of Yukon First Nation governments, and I wonder if that was in response to any feedback provided in the consultation process and what the advocate's role will be with respect to listening and advocating according to the priorities of First Nation governments or groups.

Hon. Laura Lang: In my conversations with both First Nation chiefs as well as internally, one of the things we decided very early on is that in no way does this advocate supersede the relationship that is very important to us, the government-to-government relationships. We will continue to empower those conversations on firearms as Minister of Justice to my colleagues, as chiefs within each First Nation.

However, the role of the advocate will, of course, continue to work with Yukoners, which includes any Yukon First Nation individual as well as Indigenous Yukoners. Again, recognition that there are separate roles and functions that we play. I believe that the advocate will be able to do a good job of representing any Yukoners' interests, and I will do a good job of representing the interests and the partnership between our government and Yukon First Nation chiefs.

Carmen Gustafson: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for clarifying that.

I did notice that the definition of "public official" didn't include a First Nation government official. I also notice right now that it doesn't include a territorial government official, which maybe I'll get to in line-by-line. But thank you for clarifying that.

It sounds very much like the federal government's policy and legislation and their take on things is going to be an important part of the advocate's role and the advocate will bring Yukon's voices to the federal government. I wonder if there is any consideration whether the advocate's role falls under any federal lobbyist legislation and how that will be addressed.

Hon. Laura Lang: Again, these details have yet to all be determined in terms of what the actual duties and responsibilities and details are going to be for the individual outside of the functions and powers outlined in section 3. But again, as work is underway, the advocate will also have to use their own judgment in terms of whether or not registering as a lobbyist is something that they are having consideration toward, and then that would be discussed with me.

Carmen Gustafson: I suggest that's probably a good question to follow up on once this legislation passes.

The minister made quite clear last week and earlier today that she wasn't going to disclose any analysis or potential compensation range for the advocate. I do have some more questions about how the position will work. She assured me that there would be checks and balances, so I'm interested to hear some more about those. Could the advocate be employed in another capacity while they work as the firearms advocate?

Hon. Laura Lang: Section 4 of the proposed bill does outline the eligibility for the individual, and so as long as that is adhered to, then, of course, a person could have another job.

Carmen Gustafson: In section 4, it outlines positions — the firearms advocate could not be a Chief Firearms Officer or firearms officer, a member of the public service of the Yukon or the Public Service of Canada, or a Member of the Legislative Assembly or member of the Senate or the House of Commons. The minister clarified that they could have other employment as well. Could the firearms advocate be a Cabinet employee?

Hon. Laura Lang: The conflict-of-interest provisions would apply to this position.

Carmen Gustafson: I do see that part 4 of the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act* applies, but could the minister just confirm for me whether that means that the advocate could be working for Cabinet?

Hon. Laura Lang: That's not what is being contemplated, and as I've already said, for any outside employment, there would, of course, have to be the conflict-of-interest provisions applied to that consideration.

Carmen Gustafson: The minister also wouldn't really say how much the advocate will spend on travel, but given the lobbying nature of the work, I would assume that they would be making at least some in-person visits outside of the territory.

Will there be a pre-approval process for travel, and who would consider those requests?

Hon. Laura Lang: As I've also previously stated, these are details of the position that have yet to be worked out. But of course, in terms of the actual process that will be applied, the standard process of checks and balances will be applied, and that would include — as Minister of Justice, I do approve all travel for my officials.

Carmen Gustafson: Today I asked a question that the minister responded to comparing some other offices or programs within the Yukon Government. But is there an office or program that operates with a similar sort of compensation or funding model that was used when determining how to create the firearms advocate position?

Hon. Laura Lang: There was not a specific model that we actually applied to the creation of the advocate position within this bill, and like any piece of legislation, again, this is a framework.

These are operational questions that the member opposite is asking of me. Like these other positions that I've already mentioned during QP, again, the provision of office space, equipment, other operational needs for the statutory positions I previously mentioned are handled at the operational level, and those also might change over time. Again, I would suspect that would also be something I would be considering for this position.

Carmen Gustafson: This flexible framework that the bill is creating, the program funding is that the minister may provide the financial assistance and other support to the advocate. That's not through an order; that's just through the minister, and the act specifically uses the term "financial assistance", which is perhaps an unusual way to word that.

I'm wondering why the choice was made to sort of use that wording or to do that through that section.

Hon. Laura Lang: I respectfully disagree with the member opposite. When I read section 7 of the proposed bill, I do not see that as unusual wording in any way. The funding for this position will be part of the appropriation act which will be debated during the 2027 Spring Sitting, and the operational details of the position will be further outlined through a ministerial order.

Carmen Gustafson: Thank you for clarifying that. When I asked previously, it sounded like there was a potential that funding could come prior to an appropriation from other departmental programs. It sounds from the minister now that she's clarified that's not the case.

In the case that there was not adequate funding for the advocate to do the things that firearm owners wanted the advocate to do, could they raise money from other sources or accept money from other sources? I know the minister talked about being open to the Government of Canada providing funding, but could funding come from other sources as well?

Hon. Laura Lang: We are not contemplating the advocate receiving funds from sources other than the Government of Yukon. But I actually do understand and appreciate the member opposite's potential concerns on this. While there is no explicit restriction in the act, there are some reasonable limitations and safeguards that exist in the legislation, including consideration for conflict of interest and public reporting of the finances.

Carmen Gustafson: Thank you for answering that.

In the mandate implementation letter from the Premier, it talked about developing a full suite of options for consideration of legislative and non-legislative options.

I am curious if the minister can let us know what non-legislative options were considered and when we might see those.

Hon. Laura Lang: The non-legislative options we are exploring include the permanent appointment of the Chief Firearms Officer position for the North, and that includes whether it's located here in Whitehorse or in other places.

I can applaud officials for bringing this matter to federal attention as they have so far, but it has lacked the robustness on the Yukon's voice to the matter. While the good work has been done, there is not the emphasis on what we've been hearing the last couple of months, and so the advocate will be able to do that in a way that's very different from the official working tables that both my deputy and my ADM colleagues sit at. I'm looking forward to seeing that more intimate communication around the realities of what's on the land, in terms of what Yukoners are saying is needed here regarding the CFO appointment. Again, that is but one example.

Carmen Gustafson: In terms of the development of this legislation and the kinds of analyses that were done, was a gender-inclusive diversity analysis done in the development of this legislation?

Hon. Laura Lang: Yes, that is an aspect of any type of Cabinet analysis that is provided to us.

Carmen Gustafson: Could the minister share how that analysis shaped the creation of this role?

Hon. Laura Lang: Thank you for your patience. I didn't want to be flippant and just say "Cabinet confidence", especially on a question that is of this significance.

When I reflect on the advice that I've been receiving for many months through both my officials from the Department of Justice as well as through my Women and Gender Equity Directorate, I can confirm that when I read the preamble as well as the duties and responsibilities outlined in this bill, there was certainly a level of consideration that went into that from the GIDA perspective.

We also recognize that in addition to having this bill going forward for a very specific purpose, so too are we moving forward on many other areas related to both gender-based violence as well as intimate-partner violence. When I think about the relationship between firearms legislation and violence against women in the Yukon, it's not about primarily regulating hunting or lawful firearms users or responsible firearms users. It's about using licensing, background checks, protection order provisions, and firearms removal powers to

reduce the risk that intimate-partner violence escalates into serious injuries or femicide. Again, that is an area that I am working with my federal colleagues on, and I'm looking forward to continuing to see very tangible efforts underway not just nationally but also here in the Yukon. That is one of the reasons we put forward — not just as we are assessing how we implement the NAPGBV funding — the new funding that will be coming through the federal government — but also how we are implementing the violence prevention framework through the Women and Gender Equity Directorate in terms of how we are actually preventing violence from the starting point.

Thunder Bay has a great model that I'm excited to see Yukon take on in a way that is far more responsive to our identity and our culture and hopefully becomes somewhat of a trailblazer in this area. I've already committed to sharing our work with other jurisdictions, and I will be happy to bring that information to the floor of this Assembly at a later date.

Carmen Gustafson: I appreciate those words of the minister. I think it's an important issue, and I appreciate her answer.

At section 2, it says that "… the office of the Yukon Firearms Advocate is established as a corporation sole."

Why was the decision made to create them as this legal structure as opposed to something else?

Hon. Laura Lang: The advocate is set up as a corporation sole in order for it to operate outside of the public service. As a reminder to us all, a corporation sole is a mechanism that creates an independent legal personality for the office, which would, for example, allow it to enter into contracts tied to the office and not the individual that holds the office at that given time.

Carmen Gustafson: What are some other examples in the Yukon of offices or positions that use this legal structure?

Hon. Laura Lang: The most common use of a corporation sole as a public entity is for public trustees. In the Yukon, the public guardian and trustee is designated as a corporation sole under their enabling legislation.

Carmen Gustafson: The public guardian and trustee acts on behalf of individuals and their estates, including minors and people who are otherwise unable to act for themselves. In part of their role, they need to bring litigation in the best interests of their clients. Is it anticipated that the advocate would need similar powers to bring litigation, or is it some other reason to have this structure?

Hon. Laura Lang: I'm smiling because the answer simply is no. The reason for the corporation sole is to provide the legal personality. That's as simple as it is.

Carmen Gustafson: Perhaps then the minister could explain why the advocate is not a public servant.

Hon. Laura Lang: Simply because we'd like this position to be independent, not be tied to the *Public Service Act*, any of the authorities that go along with that, and to allow us flexibility. That includes if there comes a time where the position is no longer necessary because we've achieved our objectives, then we simply don't have the position. You cannot easily do that within the public service.

Carmen Gustafson: The question that I was asking about bringing litigation is if this is a separate legal entity, would they be able to bring litigation against a government, the Yukon Government, or the federal government?

Hon. Laura Lang: We are not imagining that the advocate is going to be bringing forward litigation in any way.

As a reminder, what the advocate is empowered to do is to hold dialogue with the firearms community and stakeholders across the territory, support and advocate on behalf of lawful Yukon firearms owners, provide advice to the Minister of Justice on firearms issues and share findings from public discussion and engagement work, and identify and fill education gaps and support programming initiatives in the territory aimed at promoting safety and other culturally relevant firearms training.

In addition to that role, the budget is controlled through the government through the appropriation act. Not only is there no litigation component anticipated or desired through this role, the budget is also going to be controlled by us, debated in this House, and then the advocate will operate based on that. I hope that suffices as the answer.

Carmen Gustafson: I do appreciate that, and the minister responded when I asked about why this role was outside the public service, saying that if they don't need the role anymore, they could easily get rid of it, like they couldn't with the public service.

Why is it so important that this role be so very independent in its structure, but yet the minister seems to suggest that she will have quite a degree of control? Those seem like two very different and opposing directions to me.

Why does the role need to be so very independent and outside of government if the minister ultimately directs the role and how they spend their money?

Hon. Laura Lang: Again, the member opposite and I are going to have to agree to disagree on this. I do not see anything here that I have said that is inconsistent.

The structure exists to create that independence, and to do that, that structure is bound within the bill. The duties are outlined in section 3 of the bill. We've got the structure that is outlined. We've got the duties outlined. We've also got the financial accountability outlined. Everything has been well-explained and articulated within the bill as well as through further details in this debate. Again, I respectfully don't see anything that I'm saying as inconsistent.

Carmen Gustafson: I guess the question is really: What is it that the firearms advocate can do that government can't already do without the legislation? What's the sort of value-add to Yukoners here? I hear about bringing Yukoners' voice to Ottawa and advising the minister on things. The minister has many positions that advise her already. She's brought Yukoners' voice to Ottawa already.

Why is it necessary that we do this through the advocate and not through existing avenues?

Hon. Laura Lang: With just a smidge of frustration, I will say I've already answered that question multiple times both today as well as last week.

Justin Ziegler: I'm sorry to hear the minister is frustrated. I have a few questions. I hope that will dissipate this.

But sometimes the frustration is also on our end and also on Yukoners' end.

My question is about drafting of the bill, and I would like to know what the process is like if it's being drafted in English and then translated or drafted in both languages. What is the process like?

Hon. Laura Lang: Lovely question, to the member opposite, because it actually speaks to the relationship between not just the drafter who's drafting the bill, but it also speaks to the French drafter who works in concert with the lead drafter on the English provision. They work as a beautiful team, and questions are raised throughout the process when a bill is developed. I remember actually being in quite a degree of awe over my years as a public servant watching that happen. It was beautiful to see the questions that would come up from both the English perspective but also the French perspective, all leading to a far better bill for Yukoners to then have presented in the Legislative Assembly. Again, it is quite an intimate iterative process, and both English and French are equally authoritative, and it is important that the bill aligns in both languages.

Again, while in the English language when I read something, I expect it to mean a certain thing, because as an English speaker, I read it and know it in my common way of acting in life. Because there's a legal element, that language can sometimes be different, so I'm looking forward to answering those questions if the member opposite has those.

Justin Ziegler: My understanding is that both versions of the law are drafted at the same time, and then I suppose they're presented to the minister. How much time is there between tabling and the final version, and what are the steps in between?

Hon. Laura Lang: I'm looking forward to potentially having the question asked in a different way, but I'm going to take a step to say that if the question is: How are we making sure that both the English version of the bill and the French version of the bill are doing the thing that it was intended to do? — there is a thorough peer-review process that is applied during the creation of the bill before we table it in the House.

Justin Ziegler: Yes, my questions are going to be about the differences between the French version and the English version. But before I get to ask my question, I would like to understand what the process is.

Who reviews the French version for the minister? Is there a specific process in Cabinet for this?

Hon. Laura Lang: The process that applies to both English and French is exactly the same, and the Legislative Counsel Office is available to answer any of the questions in either English or in French. As I've already mentioned, the peer review process is exactly the same, and not only do they have that process, but they also have specialized lawyers who are schooled to be drafters, and that includes for the French aspect of the bills.

It is a beautiful art. I admire their detail. I have often been amazed at what the drafters are able to come out with — the creativity. When I say it is an art, it really is an art.

Again, any Cabinet member is able to request further information from the drafters as well as to explore any questions they might have in either of the languages.

Justin Ziegler: In this process, is there a moment where the anglophone team and the francophone team get together and see if there are any discrepancies between the two versions, or does that belong to the minister? Is that being done in Cabinet?

Hon. Laura Lang: That is the entire process. The way a bill is developed is the way that legislative counsel works together with the English side and the French side. They literally are drafting together. Then that information is brought forward for Cabinet consideration. There's not a moment where the French and the English are not constantly being considered together.

Justin Ziegler: Has any department ever had to amend a bill because the French version didn't match the English version?

Hon. Laura Lang: Earlier in the Sitting, we had the miscellaneous statutes interpretation act that came forward, and that had amendments, as an example, to some bills that were in English.

It can happen on either side. That's one of the reasons we have that provision, and that will come forward every few years to this floor.

Justin Ziegler: During the debate for the *Residential Tenancies Act*, the Minister of Community Services said that any discrepancies between French and English are always the responsibility of the Minister of Justice.

Is this correct? If so, how does it work?

Hon. Laura Lang: As the Minister of Justice, I absolutely am responsible for the Legislative Counsel Office, which therefore means I am also responsible for the French and English representation of the bills. If the member opposite has a concern with that, of course, I'm always happy to have an e-mail provided to me on any bill that there may be something to discuss.

Justin Ziegler: I will get there. I still have a couple of questions.

The minister said previously that this bill was modelled partly on other jurisdictions. Do any of those laws exist in French?

Hon. Laura Lang: I actually didn't know the answer to that, and I've just learned that neither the Alberta nor the Saskatchewan firearms legislation is translated into French. That is our current understanding.

Justin Ziegler: Can the minister tell us what term is used in French in these other jurisdictions to name the firearms advocate?

Hon. Laura Lang: I realize I stood up too soon. I may have to sit down and hear some more information from my deputy.

But what I know is that the terminology that is used in the other two jurisdictions is very different from what we are using, as is the way that they have each written their bills. Whatever it is that they use and how that is translated into French, I don't have intimate knowledge of.

Justin Ziegler: I am there. The English creates a firearms advocate. The French creates a défenseur des droits relatifs aux armes à feu, a defender of rights relating to firearms. Does the minister agree those two titles mean different things?

Hon. Laura Lang: I am going to say some French words. They are not going to be well-articulated. I believe the member opposite will have patience with me, though.

I just want to go back to the question regarding: Did we model after other provinces and territories in regard to our titling? Not in relationship to the firearms act in terms of the use of Alberta or Saskatchewan, but yes in relationship to bills with the word "advocate" in it. One example is "défenseur des enfants", and another example is "défenseur du consommateur". I'm hoping I said that well enough to be understood.

The expression that is currently used in the French version of the bill, "défenseur des droits relatifs aux armes à feu", should not be understood as defender of rights created by or inherent to firearms or users. It does not suggest that any new substantive rights, such as a right to do X or Y, are created.

The word "droit" in French is a much broader expression than "rights." It can take various meanings depending on the context of its use. Generally speaking, the word "droit" is closer to the English word "law."

I hope that answers the member opposite's question.

Chair: Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Yukon Firearms Act*.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I have a few questions this afternoon for the Minister of Justice. Some of them might be a bit repetitious, but I'm going to still ask some of them in my own way, because it helps give clarification.

Can the minister explain why legislation was needed to create this position?

Hon. Laura Lang: Sorry, I was just surprised that we've moved on to the Third Party. Thank you for letting me just adjust myself.

As we've already stated many times, this was a platform commitment that was brought about during last fall's election that resulted from many Yukoners bringing voice to this particular concern not just then but over many years. It then translated into a mandate commitment that the Premier provided to me as Minister of Justice, which I then responded to in my letter, which included my how.

The firearms legislation as proposed sets out strict parameters for appointment and operation of the advocate role in an accessible and transparent fashion. The legislation establishes a legal personality for the office of the advocate and provides a clear framework for their mandate and activities as well as including protections for conflict of interest, financial reporting, and protections for personal information collected by the advocate.

I believe that answered the member opposite's question, but, of course, if I need to further clarify, I'm happy to do so.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Was there any other way to go about creating this position? Could it have been created without legislation?

Hon. Laura Lang: In order for the advocate position to actually exist, it requires that legal anchor. That is what this bill has brought forward. It is the framework — another way to describe an anchor. What it also does is allow us to be far more purposeful in terms of what the functions are for the advocate based on what we've heard from Yukoners but also constrain it if we need to. As I've said many, many times, if there is no longer a valid reason to have the advocate functioning, then we rescind the position, and that is authorized through the bill and reporting to me as the Minister of Justice.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Could the government not have just hired a lobbyist?

Hon. Laura Lang: The simple answer is no. The position is established far more broadly and is attributed specifically to the preamble set out in the bill, and that includes engagement with Yukoners. That really showcases again what it is that we value and how we see firearms being a cornerstone of the cultural component of our territory, which includes hunting, subsistence living, trapping, and generally allowing us to have safety on the land — so, very different from a lobbyist.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you to the minister for answering those questions in more detail; I appreciate that.

In the briefing with officials from Justice, they told us that no cost analysis had been done on the costs related to this legislation or the creation of the advocate. Is that correct?

Hon. Laura Lang: I'm going to respectfully disagree with my colleague across the floor in that it is my understanding that the way that the question was just presented is not actually reflective of what was asked during the Opposition's briefing. I'm going to imagine if the question was: Can you please tell me what costing has occurred on this position? — I know for certain that my officials would never have said no costing has occurred. What they would have said is that advice given to the minister cannot be provided.

Now, this is something that I've also already spoken to a lot. The legislation sets out a framework. The financial component will come through during the administration act presentation in the spring of 2027, which the firearms position will be part of. At that time, if there are questions specifically to the funding of this position, I'd be very happy to answer those.

Debra-Leigh Reti: With trying to understand that answer, I know that every piece of legislation that comes to the House is approved by Cabinet. Is the minister saying here that this bill was approved by Cabinet with no cost analysis done?

Hon. Laura Lang: I did not say that, Madam Chair.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Officials also told us that there was no template for this position. What does that mean? Why did the government create a position with no template to build on?

Hon. Laura Lang: The great thing about being a territory, like any other province, is that you get to have autonomy to do things that include being creative for the needs of the province or territory. In the Yukon, we made a decision that while there are examples of firearms legislation in both Alberta and in Saskatchewan, it doesn't work for us for a number of different reasons. One of them primarily is because we have different constitutional provisions that allow us to do different things. We don't have the authorities of provinces. We have a far closer relationship to the federal government. The roles that were set out in both the Alberta legislation as well as the Saskatchewan legislation are doing things that we want to do something different from. While that works for those two provinces, what we want to see done here is reflective of what is in the bill as set out in the preamble and is best represented through the advocate.

Debra-Leigh Reti: At this point, it sounds like there's no budget for this new advocate identified for the remainder of this fiscal year that runs until March 31, 2027. Is that correct?

Hon. Laura Lang: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. I did answer this last week, so it is going to be repetitive, what I am saying.

If an advocate is appointed before the next fiscal year and any related appropriation does take effect, work would be undertaken to assess the feasibility of supporting initial startup work within this fiscal year without affecting the other priorities or programs and services delivered by the Department of Justice. That would be from the month of January to the end of March 31, so approximately three months, if we were able to do that. Otherwise, the actual function of the advocate as a budgeted item would occur through the appropriation act for 2027-28.

Debra-Leigh Reti: If there is any budget needed from January to March, where will it come from, as there's nothing allocated in the spring or the supplementary budget? Also, what would the budget be then next year after March 31?

Hon. Laura Lang: I'm going to say this one more time, and then if the questions continue, I'm just going to start moving into: I've already answered it.

Again, from January until March, if the position of the advocate is appointed and budget is required for that position, as I've just said, work would be undertaken to assess the feasibility of supporting initial startup work within this fiscal year. That would happen from January to March 31 without affecting the other priorities or programs and services delivered by the Department of Justice.

The budget dollars that would be attached to this position would be applied through the appropriation act for 2027-28, which would then be debated during the Spring Sitting next year.

Debra-Leigh Reti: If the minister can understand, I was just trying to find out where the money would come from, since nothing's been allotted, and I'm not getting that answer. I'm not getting that answer.

The minister said last week that no decisions have been made on whether the advocate will have an office or staff. Is that still correct?

Hon. Laura Lang: Yes, that is still correct, and I will provide a few more detailed points to this. The advocate's operational budget will need to be developed in parallel with finalizing more detailed implementation planning and priority-setting for the advocate, because those two things have to align.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I'm just going to ask the minister if she could just clarify: there's been lots of conversation — I understand that — but what's the anticipated salary that the Yukon firearms advocate will have? Will they be paid by salary or by contract?

Hon. Laura Lang: Remuneration for the advocate will be clearly and transparently established in a ministerial order and published in the Yukon Gazette, and, of course, the appropriation act will provide the opportunity for considered debate on any line item, and that would include the funding that would be attached to the advocate.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for that detailed answer; I appreciate that.

Why did the government decide to make the advocate a ministerial appointment instead of a Cabinet appointment?

Hon. Laura Lang: It is actually normal for a decision of this type to have my authority to decide who the person would be instead of the entirety of Cabinet, and, of course, I take great pleasure in noting that not just my Cabinet colleagues but the whole of caucus does trust in my ability to be the Minister of Justice. Thus, I'm afforded things like this, and if at such a time I'm no longer trusted as the Minister of Justice, I am certain I will be told this.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for that. Does that mean that the government will come to the all-party committee on appointments, or will the minister just make the decision?

Hon. Laura Lang: I also sit on the boards and committees, and so I appreciate where the member opposite's question is coming from. No, I will be making this decision as the Minister of Justice, as outlined in the bill.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for that answer. This may have been answered too, but I just want to make sure that I've covered all my questions. Where will this position be based? Are there any decisions on that yet? Whitehorse, Ottawa, other Yukon communities? Since we've been talking about it for two weeks now, I'm just wondering if there are any decisions made on this one.

Hon. Laura Lang: It will be a Yukon-based position, and the details for whether or not the position will be here in Whitehorse or a position in a community will come at a later time once we know whom the position will be afforded to.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I know there's been also lots of talk about why there is no mandate letter yet and so forth, and it has been explained. With the assumption that this bill is going to pass, what's the timeline anticipated that a mandate letter will be created?

Hon. Laura Lang: Just to be clear: Never have I used the word "mandate" to describe what will be afforded in terms of direction to the firearms advocate position.

Moving from that, just as a reminder: The legislation outlines in broad strokes the power of the advocate, and as we are all now very aware, the advocate would be appointed at pleasure. In terms of timelines, I expect to have conversations with the advocate once appointed to discuss what the priorities are going to be and how they will approach the work under the framework that this bill creates, and that includes timelines for when their work would be completed.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Does this position actually have any power or authority, or is it really just an advisory position?

Hon. Laura Lang: I have also said this a few times now. The functions and powers are in section 3 of the bill. The functions of the advocate are the following: providing advice to the minister in relation to legislation and policies in respect of firearms use, ownership, and possession, including the impact of federal legislation and policies on the use, ownership, and possession of firearms in Yukon; communicating with public officials in respect of firearms use, ownership, and possession, including advocating for the interests of Yukon firearms users; disseminating information about firearms to the public, including information about proposed legislation and policies and their likely effect on firearms use, ownership, and possession; and promoting public safety respecting firearms, including by providing or facilitating the provision of education respecting firearms use, ownership, and possession.

I believe that within that, you can hear there's a great deal of independence, but again, as an initial step, once we hire the individual, we will be setting out the priorities for which they will then proceed in delivering on.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Would the minister be able to just share so that Yukoners have a really good understanding of this question of mine: Will the passage of this legislation allow Yukoners not to comply with the federal government's assault rifle ban?

Hon. Laura Lang: No.

Debra-Leigh Reti: The Yukon Party election platform promised to — quote: "… [prevent] the implementation of the Federal Liberal Buyback Program aimed at confiscating lawfully-owned firearms."

Is the minister prepared at this point now to admit that the Government of Yukon does not have the authority to do that and that nothing in this legislation achieves that objective at all?

Hon. Laura Lang: I thank the member opposite for this question. I'm going to go back a wee bit to components I've already spoken to before. The Yukon legislation cannot conflict with federal legislation, particularly in areas of clear federal jurisdiction. That doesn't mean that we can't create legislation that does that. We could, but then we would be found to be — I'm going to say "in contempt", because I can't find another word that best describes that we would be found to have erred in our ways by our federal colleagues. We simply do not have the constitutional authority to allow us our ability to do that. Whereas provinces and territories, while they still also technically don't have that, they have been able to do it and they have been able to do it without a challenge.

In this territory, we've made a decision as a caucus and as a Cabinet that it's not the approach that we're wanting to do at this point. Again, what we are doing instead is working to find a solution for the North, and that includes using the advocate as one mechanism to bring Yukoners' voice to the concerns of programs like the assault-style firearms program.

Again, as a reminder to ourselves, we are working very hard to work with our federal colleagues to find a solution for the North that includes a partnership with our other two territories, to look at how we can together find a less contentious way to advance this matter without leaning into legislation that is contrary to what the federal *Firearms Act* is currently saying. Our interest continues to be working with our federal colleagues.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I guess that answer from the minister just provokes another question from me. I'm trying to understand that there was a promise on the platform — if the Yukon legislation cannot cross the federal legislation, can the minister share why her government promised to prevent the implementation of the federal Liberal buyback program to Yukoners?

Hon. Laura Lang: One of the things that we've all learned since coming into office is how important relationship building is, and yes, our platform absolutely said that. When we came in, absolutely, that was the perspective that we held even though we knew that could come with some challenges. But instead, what we're doing is again bringing vocal opposition to the program. What we're doing is bringing letters to the attention of our federal colleagues that demonstrate: This does not work for the Yukon. You're not listening to what our northern reality is, nor are you respecting that engagement includes coming directly to our territories and learning from us what we're actually looking for in terms of a more appropriate response to a program that has a competing statement of its purpose versus its actual rollout.

We know that through the advocate, this is going to be creating a voice for Yukoners in a way that is different than what I myself as minister bring to those tables. Again, the purpose of the bill is working to showcase to our federal colleagues that we're here to work with you, but we also want to bring the voice of what works for the Yukon to these varying tables, regardless of whether it's at the ministerial level, at the deputy officials level, or at the advocate level. I'm looking forward to seeing some progress made in that way.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I guess that again just makes me question — you talked about building relationships, letters, advocacy — maybe we could have just had an advocate or a lobbyist work with the CFO who's coming to the Yukon.

Just thinking about when this legislation was created to bring us — a couple questions: Did the minister's department support this legislation from the beginning? Did the minister receive any advice from her department not to proceed with this legislation?

Hon. Laura Lang: I have a very strong working relationship with my Justice colleagues, and I appreciate the advice that they give me on a daily basis, including right now. Nobody is going to question whether it was very clear in our mandate letter what we were expecting me to do as the Minister of Justice on this. My officials have done an incredible job of supporting me through the whole process, as well as do caucus and Cabinet, and that includes

laying out a variety of different options for us to consider. This is where we've landed.

I thank again my two officials who are here today and the folks who are on the line in the Department of Justice. They have been extraordinary in standing with me in finding the best solution to ensuring Yukoners' voice is well-represented.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for that answer. It was not to cause contention; it was just trying to understand how bills are created, and one like this that has quite a few questions is where that question came from.

Could the minister just explain if all the legal drafting was done by the Yukon Department of Justice, or were there some contracts to outside legal counsel?

Hon. Laura Lang: The work was all in-house.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Section 9 of the bill extends the conflicts-of-interest regime that applies to Cabinet employees under part 4 of the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act* to the Yukon firearms advocate.

Could the minister explain why the government used this approach to address potential conflicts of interest, and maybe what conflicts is the government worried about?

Hon. Laura Lang: Using an existing framework for conflicts of interest was the simplest way to address concerns. I'm going to add a wee bit more detail to this, though. It is simple, it is more efficient, and it's more effective as opposed to creating a new conflict-of-interest regime for this office.

It is expected that an appointed firearms advocate will not pursue endeavours that may compromise the advisory and advocate nature of this position as outlined in the legislation or disburse public funds that may be allocated to the office in ways that may benefit the advocate's private financial interests. Again, it is a process that is already in place. We literally picked it up and put it into this, and I expect it will work just fine.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you to the minister for that. Could the minister share why section 10 of the act is needed? Is this clause common in Yukon laws? Could the minister provide some examples from other pieces of legislation?

Hon. Laura Lang: Immunity clauses are quite common and are typically included for officers and directors of statutory corporations. As officers of statutory corporations typically carry out public duties but do not have the same protections as employees of the government, an immunity clause facilitates officers of statutory corporations to carry out their public duties in good faith under the parameters of the legislation.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I just want to thank the minister and her officials there for helping with the answers and the work that they're doing.

In my second-last question, I asked what conflicts the government was worried about, and I'm just wondering if the minister could just share what initiated this, if there were any conflicts that can be common that they're worried about.

Hon. Laura Lang: There isn't anything specific that we had in mind, but again, we wanted to ensure that this was part of this bill, and it is a relatively normal provision to be included.

Justin Ziegler: I would like to keep going about the differences between the French version and the English version. We were on the title before the break, and the minister said that the word "droit" had a broader meaning in French and that it can mean "the law". That is true, but this is only in singular. As soon as "le droit" turns into "les droits," these are two different meanings. "Le droit" is the law; "les droits" is the rights. The bill uses the plural, and in French, there's no other way to read it.

The second thing is the two examples that the minister gave. One was "child and youth advocate", which is, funny enough, "défenseur des enfants et de la jeunesse", which is "defender of child and youth". There are no rights even in there, although child and youth have rights.

I didn't really get the second example, but I have found a few that I'm going to name here. New Brunswick has a child and youth and senior advocate. This is in French: "défenseur des enfants, des jeunes et des aînés", which is "defender of the youth, children, and elders". Manitoba has an advocate for children and youth and also a seniors advocate, and these in Manitoba — that's interesting — "protecteur des enfants et des jeunes" and "protecteur des aînés", which are "protectors of children and youth" and "protectors of elders". I thought that was interesting. Ontario also has a provincial advocate for children and youth, and the name in French is: "intervenant provincial en faveur des enfants et des jeunes", which is "someone who intervenes provincially in favour of youth and children". The other example I could find was in the Yukon: "workers' advocate" is a defender of workers: "défenseur des travailleurs".

There is no right or rights here, except in Bill No. 11, Yukon firearms advocate, which is "défenseur des droits relatifs aux armes à feu au Yukon", which is "defender of the rights related to firearms in the Yukon". My question is: Does the minister think that owning a firearm is a right?

Hon. Laura Lang: To the member opposite, the federal *Firearms Act* outlines how any Canadian can own a firearm. It doesn't matter what I think; what I know to be true is what the federal law has outlined to be true. What I also know is that I very religiously rely on the advice given to me by my officials, which includes the French drafter whom I have had the pleasure of working with on and off over a number of decades. I rely on his advice absolutely without ever truly questioning what it is that he is saying to me.

In fact, I rely on both drafters immensely for the advice that they give, and so to question whether or not "droit" has been used appropriately or not — I will ensure that I provide that information back to the public servants who have worked so hard on this bill to ensure accuracy, and they can take up whether or not this particular word has been appropriately used or not. I have a feeling, though, that they believe the word has been used appropriately.

Justin Ziegler: I'm causing quite a disturbance with a very simple question. I have to tell everybody: I read the law in my native language, that is French, and I'm not going to feel sorry about this, because the French version creates a defender of the rights of the firearms owner. I'm not going to explain to other members who don't understand French what I understand in my mother language. This is actually insane.

There are other points about it. Before this, there is something else, and nobody's going to laugh, because it's not questioning the rights of firearms owners. Section 8 talks about financial assistance received from the minister during the preceding year. The French has the money going the other direction. It says, "et du soutien financier reçu par le ministre au cours de l'année précédente", which translates into "finances received by the minister during the previous year."

How can we have versions of the law in English and in French with money going in opposite directions?

Hon. Laura Lang: We have conferred, and I can share that the English and the French legislative counsel are both of the opinion that each version is in alignment.

Justin Ziegler: According to what I read, it doesn't align. The money is literally going in opposite directions in both versions. I don't know what to say. What happens if there is a court case and the person invokes the French version of this? What is the process? What would happen?

Hon. Laura Lang: I've already given my response.

Justin Ziegler: What happens is when there is a doubt, it's actually what the two versions have in common that will prevail. If there is a doubt, they will listen to the proceedings that we're having right now. Right? It happens. There is a doubt on the law; two versions are different — it happens. It happens, so they would just listen to the proceedings.

My question is about section 8. Which direction is the money going? Is it going to the minister or from the minister?

Hon. Laura Lang: Based on that, section 8(1) is intended to provide an accountability and reporting mechanism to support transparency in how public funding provided by the Government of Yukon is used by the advocate.

Justin Ziegler: In the case of section 8 that is different in English and French, is the minister willing to bring some amendments to clarify the French version so that we understand which direction the money is going?

Hon. Laura Lang: Thank you to the member opposite for these questions. I don't speak French; I speak English only. I want to make sure that we have addressed any concerns that the member is raising perfectly, so I'm going to go back and I'm going to speak to my legislative drafters to find out: Is there any merit in what is being said? Because I want to make sure, to the member opposite's point, that this does say the same thing. While I feel very certain it does, I'd like to come back with that answer.

Justin Ziegler: I'm glad to hear that the minister admitted that there could be discrepancies between the French and the English version. Now, I totally understand and appreciate the fact that the minister doesn't speak French — and I actually wish that she never does, because when she does, people might laugh at her for it.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Chair: If a member feels there's a point of order, they need to rise now.

Point of order

Chair: Member for Takhini, on a point of order.

Kate White: Members opposite were using the term "dishonourable" while off-mic, which would be — wow, we could go for 19(i), abusive or insulting language. Yeah, I'm going to go with that one: abusive and insulting language.

Chair's ruling

Chair: The Chair doesn't have, I guess, the good fortune to have heard what the member heard, so I cannot rule on this point of order given that the member acknowledges it was off-mic.

I would caution members to mind their language. Let's carry on.

Bill No. 11, *Yukon Firearms Act — continued*

Justin Ziegler: I noted a few differences between the English and the French versions. Sometimes it's the difference between using the word "engage" and using the word "consult". Sometimes it's using some different words like "offering" and "giving". These are differences that would help me and probably Yukoners to understand the law and how it works better.

I'm glad to know that the minister will consult, and I would like to know if the minister is willing to table what came out of this conversation before Third Reading.

Hon. Laura Lang: Madam Chair, I regret that it just got a wee bit heated between us, as we're trying to establish a pretty good piece of legislation for Yukoners. I'm, of course, willing to take under advisement what the member opposite has shared with me, and I thank him for his thoughts.

Carmen Gustafson: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would like to thank my colleague from Riverdale South. It's not often in this House that we have an opportunity to hear debate about the two official versions of the legislation. That is an important piece in the legal interpretation of legislation, and mistakes can be made. For instructions to officials who are drafting in both of the different languages, it's important that those instructions are similar for the two drafters. I appreciate what my colleague has brought before us, and I hope to hear more of that as we have the pleasure to have a francophone in this House.

I wanted to go back to the costing of this position. The minister has said that she has answered questions but then also that this is O&M and we wouldn't normally see this in a bill and that all the bill is doing is setting up a framework. There was also reference previously to a similarity with the public guardian and trustee.

I just want to take us all on a little trip back to November 17, 2003 when the *Public Guardian and Trustee Act*, among others, was being debated in this House and the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun at the time, Mr. Fairclough, asked: "What is the cost of bringing forward this bill?" The Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Jenkins, at the time said: "It breaks down over three different areas. For Health and Social Services, it's going to cost $91,400 in ongoing O&M. This includes a new half-time social worker position to work with the adult service branch, and this individual will work with regional social workers, adult services case

managers and community agencies and First Nations to implement the adult protection provisions of this legislation, and it's the establishment of the capability and consent board to deal with matters arising out of the Care Consent Act and the Mental Health Act. In addition to that, we have $71,500 in one-time costs that go toward training, education, development of forums, brochures, manuals, et cetera."

He goes on: "In the Department of Justice we have $117,086 in ongoing O&M costs. This includes 1.5 new positions for the office of the public guardian and trustee and $50,000 in one-time costs, which include office equipment, computer, et cetera for the two new positions, system upgrades to address the added accounting functions required to administer the financial affairs of incapable adults, training, education, development, to forums, brochures, self-help kits, others. The other costs in the Department of Health and Social Services that we're anticipating are $24,000 in O&M for assessments in hardship cases, which must be done for guardianship applications, and $15,000 in one-time costs for training to perform these assessments. It's specialized training for those who will be performing this type of assessment."

You can see, Madam Chair, that in other cases where legislation has come forward that creates positions and programs, ministers were able to provide costs of O&M and had thought through all of these particular line items. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin asked if there was an assessment of the potential cost of this program, and the minister indicated perhaps there was.

I just want to give her one more opportunity to tell us what the anticipated cost of the program is — seeing that it does certainly fit in with other similar positions that have been created here in the Yukon in the past — for members to know what those costs would be.

Hon. Laura Lang: I appreciate the member opposite finding that information which was an approach taken back in 2003. I can confirm that the budget for this office is still to be determined, and this will be established before the appointment is made. This bill provides a necessary framework to allow for appointing an advocate, determining the remuneration, and providing funding to support some activities. It also provides mechanisms to support transparency in what funds are allocated and how they are to be used. Remuneration for the advocate will be clearly and transparently established in a ministerial order and published in the Yukon Gazette, and the advocate's operational budget will need to be developed in parallel with finalizing more detailed implementation planning and priority-setting for the advocate, as these two will need to align.

Carmen Gustafson: Just my final question is whether the minister doesn't want to tell us or she doesn't know how much the position will cost approximately.

Hon. Laura Lang: I have already answered that.

Kate White: In listening to the debate that's happened up to now, I just have some questions. I was interested to know if the firearms advocate will be able to receive gifts. I'll just start with that. Can that person receive gifts?

Hon. Laura Lang: Without repeating what I've previously said, no, a gift would not be allowable.

Kate White: I appreciate that response from the minister. I'm just trying to get a sense — as an example, could the advocate be the recipient of a paid trip to another jurisdiction to attend a gun show? Could they be invited with all the costs covered, paid for by someone else? Is that considered a gift, and if it's not, is this a scenario that exists? Could the firearms advocate be the recipient of a paid trip to attend, as an example, a gun show? I'm just trying to find something that's relevant. Can they be the recipient of that?

Hon. Laura Lang: The intention of the bill is to ensure that they are funded through our territorial government, which is also why we have section 9, which is the conflict-of-interest section. So, again, there are reasonable limitations and safeguards that I believe we've done a pretty good job of putting into the legislation, including consideration for the conflict of interest and public reporting of their finances. Also, the act is designed to allow for public funding for programming and advocacy that would be in the interest of the public.

Kate White: The reason why I'm asking is I'm just trying to get a sense for a better understanding. Although in Yukon, this is not something that we necessarily do here, but, for example, politicians in other jurisdictions will travel — for example, maybe to Malaysia — when they're invited to go. The reason why I'm trying to get a sense is if this is a thing is because, if the firearms advocate is able to accept a trip or able to attend with those costs covered, I'm just trying to get an idea of how a declaration would need to be made or, for example, who would sign off or approve as to whether or not that could be accepted.

Hon. Laura Lang: As I've already said, the bill does not contemplate this, and in fact, section 8(3) also provides a power for the minister to direct the advocate to prepare any other reports or financial statements. I'm happy to state here that it would be a requirement for any appointed firearms advocate to include in their financial reporting any monies received from any source other than me, and as I've suggested before, it might be the Government of Canada.

Kate White: I appreciate that it's not contemplated or not included, but I'm just trying to get a sense of — for example, there are firearms advocates in the territory who would at different times maybe invite someone to speak at a gathering. I'm just trying to get a sense — although it's not included in section 8 with annual reporting — if that has been contemplated, because as an example, if the Yukon firearms advocate is able to accept an all-expense paid trip to, for example, a wildlife show in the United States, is that something that Yukoners will be able to see? Will it be declared? Will it be itemized? Will it show up somewhere?

Hon. Laura Lang: To the member opposite's question: While there is no explicit restriction in the act, section 8(3) also provides a power for the minister to direct the advocate to prepare any other reports or financial statements. As I've already said, this would be a requirement of any appointed firearms advocate to include in their financial reporting any monies received from any sources.

Kate White: Then the question becomes: Is the firearms advocate allowed to receive an all-inclusive paid trip, for

example, to maybe the Dallas Safari Club in January or similar things?

I'm trying to get an idea, based on everything the minister has said so far about what this position may or may not do, hearing from Yukoners about what they believe this position may and may not do, reading section 8 where it talks about the annual reports and including clause 3 where the minister has said that there will be a financial statement required — I'm still trying to get a sense as to whether or not that position will be allowed to accept paid trips to events that may align or may not align, depending on where the minister lands on it, to the Yukon firearms advocate. It doesn't say they can accept it, so I'm just trying to get a sense if they can accept something similar.

Hon. Laura Lang: At this time, the bill does not contemplate this.

Kate White: Over the course of the last number of hours not just today but last week, we've heard the minister say that it will be arm's length, but we've also heard that it's a position that reports to the minister, and so my question is: Does the minister envision allowing the Yukon firearms advocate to accept paid trips to events?

Hon. Laura Lang: I've already answered that.

Kate White: No, what I was told is that section 8 doesn't currently contemplate that, and I'm asking what the minister's position is. As an example, the Alberta gun show circuit in 2027 — if the firearms advocate is invited, are they allowed to accept that? Do they need to speak to the minister before accepting a trip?

I'm just trying to get a sense of what this looks like, because if it's not included, I think it's still something that is a possibility — probably a likely possibility, honestly — and I'm just looking for a response.

Hon. Laura Lang: It's something that I will think about in the creation of a more detailed approach to the responsibilities of the position.

Kate White: I appreciate that response from the minister. When will Yukoners know whether or not the Yukon firearms advocate is able to accept gifts, for example, like all-inclusive paid trips to different locations outside of the Yukon?

Hon. Laura Lang: I believe I have said a number of times now that the bill does not contemplate this. While I have said that, I've also said I appreciate the member opposite's questions. I appreciate there are some new thoughts that have come into my mind, which I will contemplate and consider as we move forward.

Once we do that and the advocate position is posted — and that goes along also with what their responsibilities will be, that includes the funding for the position, which will be outlined in the appropriation act in the spring — that's when Yukoners will know.

Kate White: Again, I appreciate that the minister says that she is contemplating the questions, but I'm interested to know what happens post-contemplation. As the position is posted, will it say the position is not allowed to accept gifts, paid trips?

I'm trying to get a sense of how Yukoners will understand who is speaking to the Yukon firearms advocate or who has their ear. We've recognized here in this Assembly for a very long time that lobbying is totally a valid activity, a valid job. But I question because, for example, if it was to the Dallas Safari Club show, that has to be explained and communicated — right? The Yukon firearms advocate would be lobbied; we need to know what that would be about. I'm trying to get a sense, and so in that same way, will folks who are speaking to — and not individuals, because the lobbyist registration is very clear that it has to be 20 hours or more — so, if there's an organization or a lobbyist who will be speaking to the Yukon firearms advocate for more than 20 hours, will they have to register in the lobbyist registry?

Hon. Laura Lang: Just to be very clear here: The advocate is tied to section 3 — and no, I'm not going to read it out again; I've done that enough times. But that section 3, as I've already conveyed, is going to be further honed in terms of what the focus and the priorities will be for the advocate for the coming time period.

Any Yukoner can lobby or advocate to the advocate as much as they want, but it has to be within the scope in which their duties have been set out, not anything outside of that. Since I don't have that — as I've already conveyed, I can't imagine what those circumstances might look like — but once we have that in place — and if there are concerns from community members regarding a sense that others are wanting to have the advocate do something else, I'm sure I will hear about that.

Justin Ziegler: I just want to make sure that my thoughts are in Hansard and that there is no room for interpretation on what I said earlier. I want the Minister of Justice to know that I really appreciate her effort to speak French, and I appreciate everybody's effort to speak French. I know first-hand how difficult it is and how vulnerable it feels to speak in another language, especially in such a public setting and especially on such technical matters. My words didn't take into account the context, and yes, I will feel hurt when people laugh when I speak French.

Kate White: Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Scott Kent: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Patti McLeod: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 11, entitled *Yukon Firearms Act*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.
Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Scott Kent: Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

Written notice was given of the following motions today:

Motion No. 195
Re Rescinding Third Reading and recommitting Bill No. 8, *Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act (2026)*
(Tredger)

Motion No. 196
Re Parks Canada staffing (Gustafson)