Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 55	1st Session	36th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, November 4, 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

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

Wednesday, November 4, 2026

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.
Visitors introduced

Speaker: Tributes.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Statement — Yukon athletes on Canada's women's Football 7 team

Hon. Scott Kent: I rise today to recognize two Yukon athletes who are representing Canada on the international stage this week. Malorie Hanson and Christine Moser have been selected to Canada's first-ever women's Football 7 national team and are competing at the IFA7 Super Cup in Lima, Peru. Their selection reflects years of hard work, dedication, and commitment to their sport while highlighting the strength of athletic development in the Yukon. Their selection is a source of pride for the Yukon soccer community and for everyone who has supported their development along the way.

Representing your country is a remarkable achievement, and their success serves as an inspiration to young athletes across our territory. On behalf of the Yukon Party caucus, I congratulate Mallory and Christine and wish them every success as they represent both Canada and the Yukon in Peru.

Statement — Dawson regional land use plan

Carmen Gustafson: The *Final Recommended Dawson Regional Land Use Plan* is the culmination of many years of effort and provides an important and exciting shared vision for the future of an ecologically, historically, spiritually, and economically rich region of the Yukon. I'd like to thank and recognize the work of everyone from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon Government staff, the commission members, industry groups, environmental advocates, community members, youth, and elders for their dedication in bringing this plan to this stage.

Public engagement is a vital part of the process, and consultation will continue as the plan moves forward. I encourage all Yukoners, especially those with a connection to the region, to share their views and make their voices heard. I'm looking forward to seeing the opportunities that can move forward because of this thoughtful planning. The careful consideration given to the land, water, culture, and people will have positive impacts for generations to come.

Statement — United States election

Debra-Leigh Reti: Today, I would like to speak about the importance of the United States election. What happens in the United States and particularly with our neighbours in Alaska has very real and direct impacts on our country, our territory, and my home community of Old Crow. Decisions made can affect the health of our salmon populations, the migration of the Porcupine caribou herd, and the future of oil and gas exploration in the Arctic.

These decisions do not stop at the border. They have consequences for our people, our way of life, and our traditional lands. This is why democracy matters. The right to vote is a powerful opportunity. I look forward to Canada and the Yukon continuing to build a positive and collaborative working relationship with our Alaskan neighbours.

Statement — National Francophone Immigration Week

Hon. Laura Lang: Today, during National Francophone Immigration Week, we are reminded by this year's theme, finding one's place at the heart of Francophonie, that immigration is about more than arriving somewhere new. It's about feeling welcomed, valued, included, and respected. Ici, nous les accueillons, valorisons et respectons. C'est important.

When people feel they belong, they are much more likely to get involved, start businesses, volunteer, raise their families here, and contribute in countless positive ways to the Yukon. Their experiences, perspectives, and talents enrich our communities and contribute to the vitality of Yukon's thriving francophonie.

I would like to recognize the essential role played by community organizations, volunteers, and neighbours across the territory. Every welcome, friendship, and act of supportive kindness helps someone build a sense of belonging. Bonne Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone.

Statement — Dawson regional land use plan consultation

Brent McDonald: Nän käk ndä tr'ädäl — on the land we walk together. This is the heart and soul of the Dawson regional land use plan and the spirit of years of work by commission members, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elders and citizens, and Yukoners all contributing their traditional knowledge.

The recommended plan was delivered in March. Now the Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in governments are working together on the next step toward a final plan, and that work depends on hearing from people who live and work on this land once again.

Public consultation is now open, and in-person meetings are scheduled in Dawson City, Mayo, Old Crow, and here in Whitehorse. Residents can also participate virtually, complete the online survey, or submit written feedback. I encourage everyone to read the plan and have their say.

Statement — Yukon Mining Alliance

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Yukon Mining Alliance for more than 16 years of promoting Yukon to investors around the world. As Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture, I know how much strong local businesses and good jobs matter to our communities. Responsible mineral exploration and development can create opportunities across the territory.

Through July 31, Yukon projects had attracted more than $500 million in equity financing, exceeding the total raised in 2025. That tells us that our investors are paying attention. Our job is to turn that interest into lasting opportunities for Yukoners — training, local contracts, and respectful partnerships with Yukon First Nations.

The Yukon Mining Alliance plays an important role. They remain dedicated to attracting investments to the territory's vast mineral potential and encouraging responsible mineral discovery and development. Working under the Invest Yukon banner helps investors do that. I want to thank the board of directors and all members of the Mining Alliance for promoting Yukon and leading investment attraction activities.

Speaker: Are there any documents for tabling?

Are there any committee reports to be presented?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Doris Anderson: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to amend the *Employment Standards Act* to harmonize military reservist leave with other Canadian jurisdictions.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow through on its commitment to:

(1) adjust the community recreation assistance grant to account for inflation and index it to inflation; and

(2) update the community recreation assistance grant to support unincorporated communities.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Question — Alaska Highway safety near Kopper King

Kate White: I want to raise an important issue for residents of Porter Creek South, and that is road and pedestrian safety at the Alaska Highway adjacent to the Kopper King and Prospector trailer parks. In September, the community came together with 91 Kopper King households and 55 other Whitehorse residents supporting calls for safer roads and pedestrian access. They raised concerns about speeding, the lack of a safe highway crossing, and the safety of children being picked up and dropped off near the Kopper King Tavern along the Alaska Highway. The minister responded in a letter and said these concerns would be considered as part of future planning but provided no firm action or timeline.

When will the government meet with the Kopper King residents to explain what immediate actions they are taking in response to the concerns that they raised?

Hon. Scott Kent: With respect to Alaska Highway upgrades through Whitehorse, I'll answer this question regarding the multi-use trail plan. Detailed design work is being finalized for the Two Mile Hill to Kopper King section, including a new pedestrian-activated at-grade crossing at Prospector Road, and the project includes approximately 1.6 kilometres of new paved multi-use trail along the north side of the Alaska Highway from Two Mile Hill to Kopper King as well as a 50-metre trail connection to Seine Square. All trail sections will be paved to a width of three metres and include drainage ditches and culverts.

Kate White: Residents of Porter Creek South at the Kopper King say vehicles regularly travel through their community at dangerous speeds. In their letter to the minister, they reported seeing vehicles that appeared to be travelling around 95 kilometres per hour and sometimes 100 kilometres per hour or more in an area where the posted speed limit is 70 kilometres per hour. Because these speeds have not been formally measured, residents have requested that the Yukon Party government conduct formal traffic speed monitoring and review whether the current speed limit is appropriate beside a residential community. In a letter, the minister said those requests would be reviewed but did not say when that work would happen.

When will residents see traffic monitoring and a formal review of the 70-kilometre-per-hour speed limit beside their community?

Hon. Scott Kent: We're aware of the concerns calling for road and pedestrian safety improvements in the Kopper King area and recognize the concerns raised by the residents. The department has already incorporated a number of safety improvements into the Two Mile Hill to Kopper King multi-use trail project that I spoke about in my initial response, including a pedestrian-activated crossing and an extension of the 60-kilometre-per-hour speed zone through that area. Detailed design work is nearing completion and funding has been identified in the fall capital plan to advance the project. Changes to speed limits, crossings, and other traffic control measures are supported by traffic engineering and safety analysis to ensure the most effective safety improvements are implemented.

I'm sure that the minister will have additional remarks on this when we get into Committee of the Whole with Highways and Public Works later on in the Sitting.

Kate White: Kopper King residents, constituents of Porter Creek South, have specifically asked that the government consider traffic lights or another controlled crossing along with a sidewalk or pedestrian pathway. In response, the minister pointed to design work for a multi-use trail, and we just heard the Minister of Education add more to that. We understand that residents have already done the work of bringing their community together and explaining their needs.

When will Kopper King residents be included in the plan for a safe highway crossing?

Hon. Scott Kent: In my initial two responses, I outlined some of the work being done with respect to the multi-use trail and some of the additional safety measures that are being undertaken. I just wanted to reiterate, of course, that detailed design work is nearing completion at this point and funding has been identified in the fall capital plan to advance the project.

I would expect that the minister would have more to say about this topic in a future Question Period or when we get to Highways and Public Works in Committee of the Whole.

Question — Dawson regional land use plan implementation

Carmen Gustafson: The Dawson regional land use plan will create a road map for future land use for nearly 40,000 square kilometres, guided by reconciliation relationships and First Nation final agreements. The plan provides a framework for responsible decision-making and stewardship of land and resources that support sustainable futures.

The public consultation period for the final recommended plan opened last week, and the final approval of both this government and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in could mean the final plan could launch in early 2027. After nearly a decade in the making, proper implementation of the plan will be essential to strike the balance between environmental conservation and rights protection and economic development that has been so carefully contemplated.

How is this government planning on implementing the Dawson regional land use plan once approved?

Hon. Ted Laking: Thank you to the member opposite for asking this important question.

I agree with the member opposite that this plan provides a significant and important opportunity for the territory to address all of the issues that were outlined in the question. As the member opposite pointed out, consultation is ongoing. We are going to wait and hear and see what comes out of the consultation. It would be premature at this point in time to presuppose how that consultation goes. We want to work very collaboratively with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in on this, and so we'll have to wait and see the conclusion of that consultation before we start determining what the next steps are or how that consultation would feed into it.

Carmen Gustafson: The final recommended plan recommends caution in proceeding with hardrock mines and urges conservative management of high-risk technologies or activities in the region. It specifically highlights heap leach mining, which uses chemical solutions to extract minerals from ore and which can have detrimental effects on communities, land, vital waterways, animals, and aquatic life. A stewardship direction in the plan says, "Do not engage in or approve heap leach mining in the Region under the current regulatory regime, and wait until low-risk technologies are proven in similar environments." The plan envisions that quartz mining would not proceed in the region until it is regulated more rigorously and communities benefit without suffering from negative impacts.

The Coffee Gold project is a proposed heap leach mine located within the planning region. How is the final recommended plan being considered in the permitting process for the Coffee Gold project?

Hon. Ted Laking: As I indicated in the earlier response, we're currently consulting on the Dawson regional land use plan, and so I cannot give an answer to the member opposite today on what the results of that consultation will be. We need to go out to the public in good faith with our partners, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and engage with Yukoners to get their input to see how they would like to see that input reflected in the final plan before we talk about implementing it.

Carmen Gustafson: As approval and implementation of a final plan are on the horizon, a process for ensuring that all proposed projects and activities in the planning region align with the vision and goals of the finalized Dawson regional land use plan will be required. Conformity determinations in the environmental and socio-economic assessment process are necessary to hold projects accountable to the plan that so much time, effort, and care have gone into constructing. Without ensuring conformity, the Dawson regional land use plan would be rendered essentially useless. We already see the need for determining whether proposed projects like the Coffee Gold heap leach mine conform with the plan and what to do if they don't.

How will conformity with the plan be considered in the YESAB process? Who will be responsible for determining conformity, and how will this process be resourced?

Hon. Ted Laking: It would be inappropriate to presuppose the outcomes of the consultations that we're doing jointly with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Part of the process of the final agreements is to go out and engage and consult in good faith with the public. We're not going to presuppose the outcome of this as the member opposite has. What we're going to do is we're going to continue to work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, complete these consultations, and then we'll be able to determine next steps working with our partners, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.

Question — Community recreation assistance grant funding

Debra-Leigh Reti: Yesterday, the minister confirmed that the community recreation assistance grant had not been updated this year. This is despite a promise to do so in the Yukon Party platform. Unincorporated communities and First Nations rely on this grant to keep their community centres and recreation programs running while their costs have kept rising for more than a decade. The Yukon Party platform promised to adjust this grant for inflation.

Why was this grant not increased this year, and will the minister commit to an increase in the 2027-28 budget?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I do agree that the community recreation assistance grant is a very important and vital piece of funding for unincorporated Yukon and communities to be able to deliver the services and recreation programming in their community as well as to assist in looking after the infrastructure that they have. It varies across the Yukon. We have agreed that we would look at the community recreation assistance grant and talk to the various different organizations and communities around the Yukon to see what best suits their needs so we can formulate something that makes sense going forward.

Debra-Leigh Reti: In April, the minister told this House that there was a plan to work with the communities that receive this grant. Yesterday, seven months later, she said that work is still underway, but she did not confirm that any meetings with communities had actually taken place.

Can the minister tell this House which communities have been met with so far and when this review will be finished?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I don't have the list of specific communities that have been engaged so far on this work. I do

know that work is underway, and I've had conversations with the department about various different ideas and options and to ensure that we are connecting with the communities and getting the information we need to make changes as we move forward with this grant.

Debra-Leigh Reti: In April, the minister said the government was hoping to be in a better financial situation before increasing this grant. This Sitting, the government has told Yukoners the projected deficit is down and the borrowing limit has been increased. Updating this grant is also listed in the minister's mandate letter.

What is stopping the government from keeping its promise to index this grant?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: The member opposite is correct in that we are in a fiscal situation where we needed to look carefully at what we were spending but also know that these types of grants are very important to communities and to people participating in recreation programming throughout the Yukon. We do know that it's important to also make sure that what we are proposing and putting forward is sustainable and grows with communities' needs going forward. Simply just indexing, while that might be an option, may not be the best option. We are looking at that in the work that we're doing.

Question — Food security

Kate White: The Food Bank Society of the Yukon works hard to help individuals and families in Whitehorse and rural Yukon. The food bank distributes emergency food for up to 2,000 Yukoners per month, and approximately one in 20 Yukoners rely on their services. Last year, they distributed over half a million meals across the territory, and this year, that number is only set to rise with the food bank reporting a 25-percent increase in use so far. That is a massive increase for an organization that is already in high demand.

How is this government working with the Food Bank Society of the Yukon, the Yukon Food Security Network, and other partners to address the growing need for food bank support?

Hon. Brad Cathers: I would note that we appreciate the work that the food bank does. Also, along with colleagues, I met with the executive director a few weeks ago to talk about the challenges that they're dealing with and the needs throughout the territory, and we look forward to continuing to work with them. I don't have anything specific to announce today, but we have had conversations and appreciate the work that they do in meeting the needs of Yukoners.

Kate White: I appreciate that response from the minister, and we look forward to an announcement.

Anyone who has been to the grocery store to buy even the most basic of foods is very aware of the rising costs. Whether it's fresh produce, meat, or basic staples, everything is going up.

The Salvation Army produces a report on poverty annually. This year, this report showed that one in three Canadians are skipping meals because they cannot afford groceries. With the highest rate of inflation in the country, Yukoners are disproportionately affected by the rising costs of living.

The crisis in food affordability gets even worse when you look outside of Whitehorse. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics data shows that food costs anywhere from 15 to 106 percent more in communities. Let that sink in and try to imagine what that looks like for Yukoners who are struggling to make ends meet.

What will this government do to help rural Yukoners with the unsustainable rising costs of food?

Hon. Brad Cathers: There are a number of steps that can be taken. That includes supporting local agriculture, including within communities, to provide more locally grown food for Yukoners and for their communities as well.

We are working through Environmental Health Services on looking at the structure that we have regarding wild game donations, recognizing that plays an important role in food security for many Yukon communities, for elders, for seniors. As well, the Yukon Hospital and Continuing Care benefit from wild game donations — that also is something that recently, I believe, the food bank the member referenced previously received a donation from the Yukon Outfitters supporting the ability to provide, again, locally harvested food to Yukoners in need.

There are many parts to this. I'm not in a position to make any major announcements today other than that we are working together with others in doing what we can to make life more affordable, including supporting local agriculture and access to harvesting wild game.

Kate White: From young families to seniors, Yukoners across the entire territory are struggling to put food on the table and keep the lights on.

Food Banks Canada recently released data that shows that more than a third of the people accessing the food bank are children. Inadequate food means children have to fight low energy, fatigue, and difficulty concentrating. The longer children go hungry, the more the impacts add up to poor health and poor educational outcomes. Although this government has a food pilot program in a few schools, Yukon children are still going hungry.

What is this government's plan to address food insecurity for all Yukon children?

Hon. Scott Kent: With over $4.9 million from the Government of Canada's national school food program, the Department of Education is piloting a universal hot lunch program in seven urban and rural schools, serving approximately 1,283 students in the 2026–27 school year. Six pilots are delivered by the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate and one by Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation.

Members will recall earlier this year that the Government of Canada, through Jordan's Principle, denied the YFNED's rural food program funding, and we have sent letters of support for their appeal of that. We will also continue to support YFNED and Yukon Food for Learning with what they're doing here in the Whitehorse area of providing hot food or hot lunch programs to Yukon students.

Question — Power Potential Portal

Tyler Porter: As we all know, the Yukon needs more reliable electricity to support growing communities, Yukon families, and new businesses. We also know that it isn't just the

government who has ideas or recommendations on how to solve the energy challenges that the territory is facing; First Nation governments and the private sector also have ideas and projects to bring forward that could help meet peak demand.

Can the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources tell the House how the Government of Yukon is working to identify new sources of dependable power for the Yukon?

Hon. Ted Laking: The reality is that energy is a scarce resource in the Yukon, particularly during the coldest and darkest months of the year. The Yukon needs to identify and bring on new sources of dependable winter energy. That's why today I am pleased to announce that our government is launching the new Power Potential Portal. This is an important step toward securing the Yukon's energy future.

This new initiative gives First Nations, businesses, and other proponents a straightforward way to bring forward potential electricity generation and storage projects. We are looking for practical opportunities to bring more dependable power online, particularly during the winter months when Yukoners need it most. The portal is the first step toward eventually considering a call for power and will help us identify promising projects, build new partnerships, and better understand the opportunities available across the territory. Yukoners need reliable power, and we're taking action to deliver it.

Tyler Porter: Yukoners have heard repeatedly from this government, from Yukon Energy, and from Yukon Development Corporation that our electricity system is facing growing pressure. Demand continues to increase, communities are expanding, businesses are growing, and major economic development opportunities all depend on access to reliable and affordable power. Meeting future electricity needs will require new generation, additional energy storage, and long-term planning to ensure the grid can keep pace with the demand.

Can the minister explain what types of projects the government is looking for and how the new portal will help strengthen our electricity system?

Hon. Ted Laking: We want to hear about projects that can deliver dependable winter electricity and energy storage solutions that strengthen our grid. We're particularly interested in generation projects capable of providing more than five megawatts, but projects of all sizes are welcome. Proponents can submit projects at any stage, even if they're still exploring an idea or haven't yet completed a feasibility study.

This isn't a formal call for power or a commitment to purchase electricity. It's about identifying what's possible and where future partnerships could make sense.

This work will be essential for our larger energy planning and for identifying other opportunities to connect with the federal government for funding opportunities. The sooner we identify this, the better position we will be in to plan for investments the Yukon needs in the years ahead.

Tyler Porter: Yukoners know that meeting future electricity needs will require more than a single project or solution. It will require investments in infrastructure, long-term planning, and a clear understanding of the opportunities available to us. While identifying opportunities is important, Yukoners need to know that government is taking action to improve energy reliability.

Can the minister explain how this initiative fits within the government's broader plan to strengthen Yukon's electricity system?

Hon. Ted Laking: Our government is focused on delivering the reliable electricity Yukoners need today while planning for the demands of tomorrow. That includes advancing the Whitehorse Power Centres, revitalizing the Mayo generating station, and developing our winter reliable energy plan. These efforts are focused on strengthening winter reliability, increasing electricity supply, and ensuring our system can support future growth.

The new Power Potential Portal builds on that work by identifying additional projects and partnerships that could help meet the Yukon's growing energy needs. We can't afford to stand still when it comes to the Yukon's energy future, and that's why we're taking action on both immediate needs and long-term solutions.

Question — Property assessment review

Debra-Leigh Reti: I have some questions for the Minister of Community Services about potential property tax increases. In 2026, the Association of Yukon Communities passed a resolution asking the Government of Yukon to review property tax assessments to ensure they are reflective of current market realities.

Can the minister tell Yukoners if the government has responded to AYC's request, and if so, what was the response?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I thank you for the question. Property taxes in Yukon are a vital piece of revenue for Yukon municipalities, and it's important that everybody understands how they work. It's not entirely easy to understand how the assessment regime works.

We've been working with the AYC and their officials so that we can work together and understand how the assessments program currently works as well as to respond to their request through the resolution this year to have a conversation about what that looks like in their communities.

Debra-Leigh Reti: A review of property tax assessments will almost certainly mean Yukoners will end up paying more property taxes. Affordability is top of mind for Yukoners. We already have seen the highest cost-of-living increases in Canada in the Yukon this year. The last thing Yukoners need is another increase to the cost of living.

The minister has the ability to say no. Will the minister commit to not taking on this request from AYC, a request that will almost certainly see property taxes increase?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I just wanted to clarify that the assessments are done on a rotating basis, so every second year, municipalities are assessed, and in the opposite years, unincorporated Yukon is assessed. We, of course, need to work with our municipal partners in ensuring that what is happening is known and predictable and works for communities.

The increase in assessments is formula-based, and it works on new builds as well as just general information — I can't describe the formula here, but it does change annually, and

we're more than willing to explain how that works, but it is something that we need to make sure that we're working with municipalities on.

Debra-Leigh Reti: AYC is asking the Government of Yukon to look at increasing Yukoners' property taxes across the board within municipal boundaries. This review could also impact Yukoners who live outside municipal boundaries. It is the Yukon Government that sets tax rates for these individuals.

Will the Minister of Community Services commit that Yukoners who live outside the municipal boundaries will not see their property taxes increase as a result of this type of review?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: There are two parts to the actual property tax cost: There's the assessment and then the rate that is set by either the municipality or the Government of Yukon for unincorporated Yukon.

Now, I understand the resolution from the AYC. I don't think that exactly what they're requesting is for increasing. It's for a review of the property assessment regime, which we are happy to meet with them and discuss how that works in the Yukon.

Question — Library services

Brent McDonald: Public libraries are free, welcoming places where people can stay warm, use the Internet, read, and connect with their community. As rising living costs present more challenges, more Yukoners are also relying on libraries for safety and support. Libraries are absorbing growing social needs while continuing their regular programming and services.

How is the minister supporting libraries as more people rely on them for warmth, safety, and informal support?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: We are very excited about the different community libraries across the Yukon and the work they do for the residents of the Yukon. There are many ways that people can engage and it's a safe and secure place for people to go when they would like to. There are many options in different communities depending on size and what's available for community libraries as well as in Whitehorse here where there are additional staff on-site to support vulnerable Yukoners.

Brent McDonald: According to the Safe at Home Society, in September, youth and young adults made up 15 percent of those experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse. Libraries are one of the few accessible, safe public spaces available to our youth. The Whitehorse Public Library has a library outreach worker who provides supportive listening, mental wellness support, and connections to social services and community programming. This role is often a first point of contact for youth who need our support.

How is the government ensuring the library outreach worker has the resources needed to meet this growing demand?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: We think that libraries are obviously a very important piece of the community fabric and supporting communities and vulnerable Yukoners where we can. As I mentioned, the Whitehorse Public Library does have additional supports there to help vulnerable Yukoners and to be able to provide them with the avenue for resources when needed, and we see that as a growing need in that library space, and it has been very well-utilized, and we look forward to continuing to offer that service.

Brent McDonald: The Tagish Community Centre and library was destroyed by fire in 2025, and since then, residents have continued programs and community activities through temporary spaces. A mobile library provided limited service, but that service ended on September 30. Tagish is still without a permanent local library, and now they have no library at all. The government website tells us that plans for long-term library service are still under consideration, and residents need clarity on what happens in the meantime.

Will anything replace the temporary mobile library in Tagish before a permanent library is considered, and if so, when could it be available?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Of course, we were very sad when the Tagish Community Centre had a fire and the library was lost to that fire. It's a very unfortunate incident, and we were happy that we were able to provide some sort of service this past year with the mobile library to those residents.

I'm not aware of what the current plan is for this upcoming winter, but I can endeavour to find out if there have been any discussions with the community about library service for the winter.

Question — Dependable Grid program

Patti McLeod: Yukon has experienced significant growth in electricity demand in recent years, particularly during winter months when peak demand places increased pressure on our isolated electrical grid. Earlier this year, the government launched the Dependable Grid program as part of its efforts to address these challenges.

Can the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources explain to this House the purpose of the program and the types of projects that are eligible for support?

Hon. Ted Laking: As identified by the member, earlier this year we launched the Dependable Grid program to help address growing pressure on Yukon's electricity system during winter peak periods while improving affordability and resiliency for Yukon households. The program is funded through close to $950,000 in the spring budget, allowing us to focus available resources on measures that will reduce demand instead of increasing it.

Eligible projects include dual-fuel heating systems, primary and secondary non-electric heating systems, non-electric hot water systems, transfer switches, and incentives for highly efficient new homes. The program is specifically targeted at measures that reduce electricity demand during the coldest periods of the year while improving household resilience. Electrically heated homes can receive support to add alternative heating sources, reduce their dependence on electric heating during peak periods, and improve preparedness for potential outages. The program also encourages the construction of highly efficient homes that place less demand on the electricity grid over the long term.

Patti McLeod: When new programs are launched, it can take time to determine whether they are meeting the needs of Yukon residents. The Dependable Grid program has been available for several months.

Can the minister update this House on the level of interest the government has seen from Yukoners?

Hon. Ted Laking: We've been very encouraged by the response to the program so far. As of October 30, the Dependable Grid program has received 82 applications. The strongest uptake has been in secondary non-electric heating systems. We've also seen strong interest in transfer switches, so that families can add resilient electrical backup power to their houses. We have also seen strong interest in primary non-electric heating systems.

What this tells us is that Yukoners are looking for practical, reliable options that allow them to reduce their reliance on electricity during periods of high demand while also improving the resiliency of their own home. Many households are recognizing the value of having an alternative source of heat available during extreme winter conditions as well as the ability to maintain critical services during a power outage.

The uptake is also encouraging because it reflects the program's targeted approach. The level of interest we are seeing suggests that the program is meeting a real need and that Yukoners are willing to take action when practical and affordable options are available.

Patti McLeod: Application numbers are one measure of a program's success, but Yukoners will also be interested in the tangible results these investments are expected to deliver.

Based on the applications received to date, can the minister please update this House on the results the government is expecting to achieve through the Dependable Grid program?

Hon. Ted Laking: One of the key objectives of the program was to reduce peak electricity demand during winter months, and the early results are promising. Based on the applications received to date, the measures supported through the program are expected to reduce peak electricity demand by approximately half a megawatt. This achievement is the equivalent of completely removing nearly 100 average Yukon homes from the electrical grid during peak hours.

While no single program will solve Yukon's electricity challenges on its own, these reductions are an important contribution to our broader efforts to improve system reliability and buy the territory time while we bring more energy generation projects online. Every megawatt of demand that can be shifted or reduced during peak periods helps create additional capacity on the grid and reduces the risk of rolling blackouts. The results we are seeing reinforce the value of targeted demand management measures as part of a balanced approach to Yukon's energy future.

Question — Grizzly bear conservation and hunting

Lane Tredger: Grizzly bears are a species of special concern under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*. That means they can become endangered or even extinct if they are not protected. Grizzlies have very low reproductive rates, and their population is unlikely to recover if their numbers drop. That's why up-to-date data is so important. I understand the department has done some grizzly bear surveys in recent years.

Can the government share any recent updates on Yukon's grizzly bear population, and are they considering any new protections?

Hon. Wade Istchenko: Yes, the Department of Environment is developing a five-year progress report for the implementation of the 2019 grizzly bear conservation plan, which is anticipated to be completed in the upcoming months, and there'll be more information, and I'll share it with the member opposite.

Lane Tredger: I appreciate that. I think that'll be really helpful for the discussion going forward, because grizzly bears are a symbol of wilderness in North America. People around the world come to the Yukon to see this animal, and that means that grizzly bears are also an important part of the Yukon's tourism.

But many Yukoners and tourists alike are surprised to learn that grizzlies can be hunted from most Yukon roads. This is not the image of a wilderness leader that the Yukon works so hard to create. Seeing a grizzly bear shot from the road is not the memory that tourists want to make, and there are serious concerns from Yukoners about the ethics of this practice.

Will the government ban hunting grizzlies from all roadsides and highways?

Hon. Wade Istchenko: Grizzly bears are an important part of Yukon's ecosystem, our culture, and, like the member opposite said, our tourism economy. We are committed to maintaining healthy bear populations while ensuring public safety is really important.

The Yukon has a well-established grizzly bear management framework that balances conservation, public safety, and sustainable hunting opportunities. The Yukon's adaptive management approach to roadside grizzly bear hunting allows First Nations, communities, municipalities, and renewable resources councils to request a prohibition on roadside grizzly bear hunting in a specific area if they would like.

Lane Tredger: Another practice that is legal but that many Yukoners find ethically and environmentally concerning is the practice of grizzly trophy hunting. This is a concern for the sustainability of the grizzly population. This practice has been banned in our neighbouring British Columbia for years.

Will this government reconsider allowing grizzlies to be trophy hunted?

Hon. Wade Istchenko: Like I did say earlier, the Yukon has a well-established grizzly bear management framework that balances conservation, public safety, and sustainable hunting opportunities. We'll continue to make grizzly bear management decisions that are informed by scientific knowledge, population data, traditional knowledge, harvest monitoring, and in collaboration with First Nations and other wildlife co-management partners, municipalities, and the Yukon communities.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 51 — Airport security screening

Clerk: Motion No. 51, standing in the name of Debra-Leigh Reti.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Third Party that this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Transport Canada to institute security screening for passengers flying to Old Crow, Dawson City, and Inuvik.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise to speak to Motion No. 51, in which I am urging the Government of Yukon to work with Transport Canada to put security screening in place for passengers flying to Old Crow, Dawson City, and Inuvik.

Old Crow is the only fly-in community in the Yukon, so pretty much everything comes in on the plane. If you fly south out of Whitehorse, you go through screening. On flights within the North, you just check in and get on. I know this is a bit of a novelty for some people — walking on a plane without having to take your belt and shoes off or empty your bag. It seems like a quaint throwback to an earlier time. It makes people feel like they're in the rustic North of their dreams.

But for us, it also means nobody is checking what comes into our community. My First Nation made the decision to be a dry community years ago to address the addictions and issues facing our community. We knew it was not going to be a perfect solution, but it was one step.

Unfortunately, alcohol and drugs still get in. In May of last year, the RCMP seized vodka and suspected crack cocaine at the Whitehorse airport that was headed for Old Crow after Air North staff noticed something off with a cargo shipment. I'm very grateful to the airline staff who watched for this, but it shouldn't be left to them to pull off on an ad hoc basis.

Just recently, on one of the trips back home, I was actually sending my mum back home. We were standing there in the lineup waiting, and with this topic on my mind, there was an issue with the food cart for Air North getting down their regular route down the elevator and out to the airplane, and so they had to use a different route. I watched as security actually had to stand there and check every single package of pop, chips, butter. They checked everything, and all of us were in line waiting.

As I watched that, I saw that it was possible — that we can do that. What really triggered this was that it's possible — we can get past this; we can set up an area if we all work together. That really was impactful that day to see that.

I've raised this issue a few times now, because it was one of the first things people at home asked me to bring here, but it's not the first time that an MLA from Old Crow has brought this forward either.

To be clear, this is not just my idea. VGFN has been working on a community safety plan, and one of the recommendations is to implement screening on flights going to Old Crow, Dawson, and Inuvik.

In December, the Minister of Justice gave me a list of reasons why dealing with this issue is hard. She talked about how Whitehorse is the only Yukon airport designated for screening. The Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) is not empowered to screen for what the minister called "community contraband". The flight to Old Crow is not always direct, and there is no federal or territorial law that would let the RCMP search all mail or baggage arriving in Old Crow. These reasons are — in some places, word for word — the same points the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works made in a letter to Yukon's Member of Parliament in January 2025.

Last week, I asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works about this in Question Period, and I got a different answer. The minister told us she has been lobbying Transport Canada on this since the spring and that she has been working with her counterparts in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, who have the same concerns in their communities. She also told us the federal Minister of Public Safety has said they would be willing to set up an officials-level committee to look at the issue. I was so glad to hear that, and I want to thank the minister for that work.

The minister also said there is significant work to be done with Transport Canada and with Public Safety and Justice at the federal level. I agree, and this is why I think this motion is useful. If this House supports it, the minister can bring that to Ottawa with the backing of all of us and not just her department.

For the sake of this debate, I won't go through the challenges that we face on this issue, because I think they are all manageable if there is a desire to do so. On designation, airports are designated for screening by the federal government through regulation, and regulations can change. The Government of Yukon operates the Old Crow and Dawson airports, so it is in the best position to formally ask for Dawson to be designated. Inuvik is replacing its air terminal, with completion planned for around 2027 or 2028, and the Northwest Territories minister responsible has said she is open to including screening in the design, but that needs to happen while design and construction are underway. There is movement on this in the other territories and a path forward. The minister had told us she is already talking with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut — a formal joint ask from all three territories would carry a lot more weight than any one of us asking on our own.

On CATSA's mandate, it is true that screeners are looking for threats to the aircraft and not for drugs, but we also know how it works in practice. If CATSA screeners come across illegal drugs, they notify the police. Moreover, knowing your bag is going through an X-ray or a screening process is a deterrent on its own, and the mandate itself is something the federal government can look at, especially if northern governments ask together.

On mail and cargo, I admit that screening passengers won't close this gap altogether. Leaders in Nunavut have talked about pushing Ottawa on how mail can be checked, and changes are coming to federal legislation to broaden powers of search for mail and cargo. The Yukon should be part of those conversations.

In the meantime, the government could work with Air North and Canada Post on cargo headed to Old Crow and help the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation put its community safety plan into action. The Yukon Party platform committed to cracking down on illegal drug dealers, and this government runs these airports. I think this is a place where it can show what that commitment means for communities outside of Whitehorse. I would also ask the minister to keep this House updated on the officials-level committee with Public Safety Canada — whether it has been set up and when it is meeting. The minister offered to let me know when she hears back, and I will be following up as well.

This is a complicated issue and it involves a lot of governments, but it is something we can work through if we decide to. I am asking today for members to support this motion.

Hon. Ted Laking: I want to begin by thanking the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this important motion forward. The concerns raised for this motion are serious, and I appreciate the member's continued advocacy on behalf of the residents of Old Crow. We all recognize the challenges that remote and fly-in communities face when it comes to preventing illegal drugs and alcohol from entering their communities. Old Crow has made a clear decision to ban alcohol in the community, and we respect that decision. We also recognize the challenges the community continues to face, as alcohol and illicit drugs are still finding their way into the community despite those efforts. These are important concerns that deserve our attention and a coordinated response from all levels of government.

I want to assure the member opposite that the Government of Yukon shares these concerns and has been actively working with our northern partners and the federal government to identify practical solutions.

In April of this year, the Northwest Territories Minister of Infrastructure wrote the federal ministers of Public Safety and Transport proposing the establishment of a working group to examine enhanced screening in the North. In May of this year, Yukon's Minister of Highways and Public Works followed up by writing to those same federal ministers to lend our support to this initiative and to encourage federal action.

In June, the Government of Yukon received encouraging responses from the federal government. The Minister of Transport welcomed a collaborative approach and commended the Yukon's resolve to identify ways to prevent illegal drugs and alcohol from being transported to northern communities. Transport Canada also indicated its willingness to provide advice on the aviation security regulatory framework and identify opportunities to support complementary efforts.

The federal Minister of Public Safety similarly acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and advised that federal departments and agencies were engaging with one another as well as with industry partners to better understand the challenges and potential solutions. That response also recognized the importance of including Indigenous perspectives and engagement in this work. These were positive developments, and we welcome the federal government's willingness to engage.

At this point, it is important to recognize that aviation security screening and the enforcement of laws relating to illegal substances serve different purposes. The Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, or CATSA, is primarily responsible for screening passengers and baggage for threats to aviation security. Its current mandate is not specifically designed to prevent alcohol or illicit drugs from entering communities. At present, Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport is the only airport in the Yukon with CATSA passenger screening.

I mention these points not to discourage further action but because we want to ensure that any measures put in place are effective, appropriate, and respectful of people's rights. There may be opportunities to explore enhanced screening, improved coordination with law enforcement, additional public awareness measures, and other approaches that could help address these concerns. That is precisely why we believe a coordinated federal working group is essential moving forward. This work will only be as successful as the engagement and commitment by the federal government to work together with us.

In October, Yukon's Minister of Highways and Public Works followed up with the Minister of Public Safety again to seek an update on the identification of federal officials and the proposed next steps, including the structure, scope, and priorities of this collaborative work. We remain committed to advancing these discussions and encouraging the federal government to move this work forward.

I see today's motion as an opportunity to reinforce the importance of that ongoing work. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is raising a concern that matters deeply to the people of Old Crow, and I believe we share a common goal: safer communities and practical, effective solutions that reflect the realities of life in the North. While there are jurisdictional and regulatory questions that need to be addressed, those should not prevent us from working together to find a path forward.

The Government of Yukon has already taken steps to advance this issue with our federal counterparts, and we're committed to continuing that work. I welcome the member's motion as further support for those efforts and as an additional opportunity to emphasize to the federal government the importance of moving forward collaboratively. I'm pleased to support this motion, and I look forward to continuing to work with our partners toward meaningful solutions for Old Crow.

Brent McDonald: I rise to speak to Motion No. 51. I want to acknowledge and thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for sharing the stories from her community. The substance use health emergency has touched all of our lives in all Yukon communities, and I'm in absolute agreement that more can be done by this government to address this crisis. I understand and appreciate the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin's reasons for bringing this motion forward to support her community.

I represent the community of Dawson City, which is also included in this motion. The people of Dawson have not been consulted on this issue, and my role as MLA is to ensure the voices of the Klondike are heard in this Assembly. The approach brought forward in this motion would have real impacts on my community, and I must make sure the voices of my community are heard and engaged on this issue.

I am grateful to have the support of my Yukon NDP caucus colleagues in taking this position and in speaking up for the voices of the Klondike. Therefore, I will not be supporting this motion.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I rise today to support Motion No. 51 and thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing it forward. Air travel is essential in the North, especially to Old Crow, which has no road connection. For people travelling to Old Crow, Dawson, or Inuvik, screening is not currently required.

As Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture, I've met with local airlines and understand their operational realities. I've heard that additional support is desired to provide security screening on northern routes. Airline staff currently check bags as cargo as part of their operations, but that is different from formal screening of passengers and their carry-on belongings. Working with the federal government to provide support comparable to that of larger airports could ease the burden on local airlines while strengthening flight safety and community safety.

Screening could be one part of the broader efforts to address the movement of illegal substances into remote northern communities alongside community-led work and law enforcement. This is especially true for Old Crow, which has been a dry community since 1991. Like other communities, it faces significant substance use challenges. Screening is not a solution to those challenges, and it must not be treated as a substitute for community-led work or law enforcement. But a consistent aviation approach can help address gaps in how passengers and belongings are screened.

We must, however, ensure that the costs of any of this security responsibility do not fall on northern airlines or local communities. These operators are an important service, and they do it in challenging conditions, and we must consider these challenges and consider the regional circumstances. A lasting solution should include federal support, staffing, equipment, and facilities needed to make screening work.

This motion represents an opportunity for the Government of Yukon to work with partners to strengthen rural communities and the small Yukon businesses that serve them. This work must be done in consultation with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, other affected First Nation communities, Yukon's aviation industry, and airport staff. Their knowledge is essential in designing a system that reflects regional realities and respects the people who rely on these routes.

I raise that as part of the community context, not to suggest passenger screening should replace or expand enforcement of law. This motion is about aviation security, and the work should be developed in partnership with the federal government and the airlines and communities affected. Times evolve, and flying to remote areas should be as secure as flying anywhere else. We should also draw upon northern aviation expertise as this work moves forward.

I support urging the federal government to work with CATSA, the Government of Yukon, airlines, and affected communities to establish a path to regular federally supported passenger screening, including any required airport designations, regulations, staffing, equipment, and funding. Federal regulations must provide for designating airports on the recommendation of the Minister of Transport. As such, northern communities should not have to rely on a cost-recovery arrangement to access a basic level of aviation security.

This motion is a reasonable step toward addressing a real gap, and I support the motion and encourage other members in this Chamber to as well.

Hon. Laura Lang: I rise to speak to Motion No. 51.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the serious impact that illicit drugs, including fentanyl, continue to have on communities across the territory. We support diverse efforts that provide law enforcement with appropriate tools to address trafficking activities and to prevent the movement of illicit substances and other contraband into Yukon communities. In that regard, I have expressed support for amendments proposed in Bill S-8 to the *Canada Post Corporation Act*, which would enable law enforcement to obtain general warrants to search for and seize fentanyl and other contraband moving through the mail system. We support measures that close existing gaps that may be exploited for the movement of illicit substances and other illegal goods.

While we share the objectives of improving public safety and reducing the flow of illicit drugs, the implementation of aviation security screening is a matter within federal jurisdiction, and I do recognize this would require consideration by Transport Canada, air carriers, First Nation governments, and affected communities. Of course, any proposal to introduce passenger screening at northern airports must take into account operational feasibility, infrastructure requirements, cost impacts on travellers, et cetera. But it also must take into account the unique circumstances of remote northern communities that rely on air transportation for essential services and connectivity.

Yukoners are acutely concerned about the prevalence of illicit drugs in our territory, and I am committed to working collaboratively with federal partners, my colleagues in HPW, law enforcement agencies, First Nation governments, and communities to address illicit drug trafficking and improve community safety. In partnership with Minister Benoit and Minister Gehmair, I welcome continued dialogue with Transport Canada and other stakeholders on measures that can effectively enhance security while maintaining reliable and accessible transportation services for Yukoners.

So, I do truly thank the member opposite for bringing this motion forward, as it speaks to the broader issues of doing all we can to improve safety for all Yukoners and for all communities. Thank you again.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I remind the members that the parliamentary tradition of members referring to one another by title or constituency promotes civil discourse and discourages personalizing debate.

Kate White: Today I rise to speak to Motion No. 51, and I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing it forward, especially for sharing the perspectives of her community, which I feel really fortunate to be familiar with. Also, understanding the impacts of substance use and the substance use health emergency and how it affects Old Crow is really important. So, I'll note that members are elected to represent Yukon communities, and each member of this House represents their unique riding and the concerns of those Yukoners. So, this is an incredibly important and integral role in our democracy and one that the Yukon NDP takes very seriously.

I understand and appreciate the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin's reasons for bringing this motion forward to support her community. But I also understand that my colleague the Member for Klondike also has an important role for representing his community's interests in this Assembly. This motion, if passed, would have direct impacts on his constituents in the Klondike, and these Yukoners have yet to be consulted on this decision. Our team supports the spirit and intent of this motion, but we also support the Member for Klondike in standing with his community and the importance of community consultation. Dawson community members deserve to have a voice at the table before a decision about them is made. And so, for that reason, we — I and others — will be voting in favour of this motion, and we support the Member for Klondike in voting against it. We believe that it is an important part of democracy to make sure that we can represent those and vote with the people we represent, and I

appreciate the Member for Klondike in sharing that perspective with the team and the discussions that we had, because we believe we should be able to have those conversations, and we should be able to vote in the way that we believe. Thank you to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing it forward, my colleague the Member for Klondike for sharing the perspective of his communities, and for the comments of other members.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
If the member now speaks, the member will close debate.
Does any other member wish to be heard?

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you to everyone that's supporting this and also just for the great feedback from my colleague from Klondike. I would suspect that consultation with all communities involved would take place in the process of negotiation and implementation of something like this, and so I appreciate that as well. Talking with my other colleague here this morning and discussing the number of deaths we're dealing with from drugs and alcohol in our communities and the impacts — we talked about grandparents raising grandchildren just about an hour ago, and there's a lot more to some of these types of motions and things that we bring forward that impact our communities.

As I sat on chief and council previous to this position, we're privy to every single situation that comes through our airports from every single community, and we see where it's coming from, we see where it's going to, and then within days or a week we are picking up the pieces as chief and council. This is why I feel so strongly about continuing to push this forward as other MLAs have done before and praying and hoping that we can really make a change for our northern communities that are so impacted.

Màhsi' cho for everyone's words today.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Division

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Agree.
Hon. Scott Kent: Agree.
Hon. Cory Bellmore: Agree.
Hon. Brad Cathers: Agree.
Hon. Ted Laking: Agree.
Patti McLeod: Agree.
Hon. Laura Lang: Agree.
Hon. Jen Gehmair: Agree.
Hon. Wade Istchenko: Agree.
Adam Gerle: Agree.
Doris Anderson: Agree.
Tyler Porter: Agree.
Kate White: Agree.
Lane Tredger: Agree.
Brent McDonald: Disagree.
Linda Moen: Agree.
Carmen Gustafson: Agree.
Justin Ziegler: Accord.
Debra-Leigh Reti: Agree.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are 18 yea, one nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.
I declare the motion carried.
Motion No. 51 agreed to

Motion No. 196 — Parks Canada staffing

Clerk: Motion No. 196, standing in the name of Carmen Gustafson.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North:

THAT this House urges the Premier to write to the Prime Minister of Canada to request that the Government of Canada maintain Parks Canada staffing numbers at 2025 levels in the Yukon.

Carmen Gustafson: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Motion No. 196.

The Parks Canada Agency is among global leaders in conservation, historic preservation, outdoor recreation, and environmental interpretation. They are the stewards of 171 national historic sites, 48 national parks, five national marine conservation areas, and one national urban park that represent Canada's natural and ecological heritage from coast to coast to coast.

Parks Canada cannot achieve their mandate without adequate staffing. In the Yukon, we are home to three national parks — Ivvavik, Vuntut, and Kluane — two historic sites, a number of sites in the Klondike, and the *SS Klondike* in Whitehorse. While the Chilkoot Trail is located in BC, it is administered from the Yukon and is part of the heritage of the Yukon and transboundary First Nations and the legacy of the Klondike Gold Rush.

National parks in the Yukon are particularly special, because Vuntut and the Ivvavik national parks and the Kluane National Park and Reserve are co-managed with Indigenous governments and were created from commitments made in final agreements. There are also discussions and planning with Parks Canada or among Parks Canada, the Yukon Government, and First Nations for new protected areas in the Yukon, including potential Indigenous protected and conserved areas. Potential cuts to staffing could put these processes at risk at an important time for seeing federal and territorial commitments on the protection of nature that respects and integrates First Nation rights.

On national parks in the Yukon, the Yukon's national parks cover thousands of square kilometres, managing and preserving habitats and the Yukon's wealth of biodiversity, including species at risk. They protect healthy ecosystems and prevent biodiversity loss, which is instrumental in fighting climate change. Healthy ecosystems give us clean air and water and fertile soil while also regulating the climate. Protected spaces store vast amounts of carbon and provide natural services such as water filtration, pollination, and flood control. These natural ecosystem services should not be taken for granted. A recent study from *PARKS* journal found that ecosystem services in Canada's national parks may be worth upwards of $300 billion every year. Investing in national parks, ecological preservation, and Parks employees has a massive

return on investment for the environment, our communities, our health, and the economy.

National parks allow us to recognize environmental changes as scientists measure shifts in climate and ecosystems. This data is critical for understanding climate realities and developing informed responses. They provide cultural anchors through protecting land with historical, cultural, and traditional significance. They preserve what makes the Yukon the place that we love, the land that shapes culture, community, and identity.

Employees of Parks Canada Agency are vital to ensure the continued functioning of national parks and reserves. In the Yukon, this includes upholding the spirit and intent of the final agreements and the co-management relationship with Yukon First Nations. There are scientists, administrators, visitor services staff, trail builders, park wardens, and more. They are also on the front lines of visitor services, keeping campgrounds, day-use areas, trails, and interpretive events operating to welcome Yukoners and outside visitors alike.

Public safety and enforcement are important not only to the functioning of parks, but they have also made important contributions to the evolution of mountain safety, human-wildlife conflict management, search and rescue, and conservation law enforcement outside of parks as well through information- and resource-sharing. The warden service is an integral core of the Parks Canada Agency and must remain intact for both visitors and conservation protection.

About historic sites, Parks Canada employees in the Yukon preserve cultural heritage and historic sites that, without care and attention, would fall into disrepair or be lost entirely. This includes the *SS Klondike* that we can see from this building and many buildings and sites in the Klondike that are an integral part of the history of Dawson City and the Klondike Gold Rush. They bring heritage to life through interpretive and educational programming, reminding us of lessons of the past.

Long before I had an opportunity to experience the wildness of the Alsek River or the frontcountry of St. Elias Lake and Kluane National Park and Reserve, I grew up surrounded by five national parks: Kootenay, Yoho, Mount Revelstoke, Glacier, Banff, and further afield, Jasper National Park. They were places of adventure, exploration, and where we learned about protection of valued mountain ecosystems and history in an area also known for its natural resource exploitation outside the parks. The history of the warden service and the horses of the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch weren't distant; they were the family history of one of my high school best friends.

During my undergrad, I worked for Parks Canada in visitor services based in Lake Louise, Yoho, and the Icefields Parkway. This well-paying job with very inexpensive employee housing allowed me to save the money that I needed to get through my early university years. My first summer at Parks inspired me to switch my undergrad from nutrition science to environmental and conservation science so I could learn more about our natural world.

I can't emphasize enough the importance of Parks Canada jobs to the economic and social well-being of small rural communities like Haines Junction and Dawson. There is room to learn and grow within Parks Canada Agency to be a scientist, an administrator, to build trails or enforce the law. These are valued and sought-after positions that I'm afraid will be lost in the most recent workforce adjustment.

It's expected that 58 of 137 staff in the Yukon will be affected by this workforce adjustment. This will be 58 people who contribute to community and culture, who volunteer, participate in recreational activities, and stimulate local economies. The jobs lost are living-wage jobs that support rural and remote Yukoners. In places such as Dawson and Haines Junction, people and families may have to leave their communities because of this.

I appreciate the Member for Kluane's statement last week about the importance of Parks Canada and our shared desire to keep Yukoners employed and the integrity of these co-managed protected areas intact. The intent of this motion is to demonstrate to the federal government a united front from this Legislative Assembly in opposition to the recent and ongoing workforce adjustments by having the Premier write on our behalf to the Prime Minister to encourage halting the cuts and returning to the previous level of staffing. It's not intended to suggest that this was ideal or that additional investment in the Parks Canada Agency in the Yukon would not be welcome. To the contrary, it would. However, it's a start.

It's also intended to let Parks Canada employees in the Yukon know that we appreciate and value their contributions to environmental and historic preservation in the territory and that we stand in solidarity with them as they face an uncertain future. I look forward to hearing from other members and hope that you will support our Yukon Parks Canada Agency workers and our cherished national parks and heritage sites in the Yukon.

Hon. Wade Istchenko: I thank the member opposite for bringing this motion forward, Motion No. 196, urging us to send a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada to request the Government of Canada maintain Parks Canada staffing numbers at the 2025 level in the Yukon. While we get started here, I have had many a conversation in the last week actually long before I put the member's statement out. It has been a concern. We've seen this in the past, and here it is again.

I do want to focus on a little bit of the history of the parks. We've got Kluane National Park in my community. Dawson city has a rich mining history that Parks has done a fine job at preserving and letting everyone see. We've got — I think I spoke in the media — we've got the boat out here, which is pretty cool. We've got the Chilkoot Trail. We've got the park up north. There's a lot of activities, but I want to focus on my park, Kluane National Park.

When the Alaska Highway was built in 1942, interestingly enough, organizations like the Yukon Fish and Game Association — I remember having a conversation with Alex Van Bibber — they were pressing for a designation of an area as a national park. Its special qualities were identified, and with the influx of people and pressure, especially with hunting, as the road went through, 10,000 square miles were set aside as a park reserve. Soon after, then the Kluane Game Sanctuary was created, and that was to protect the animals, because as the highway went through, there was lots of hunting. But the locals, local organizations, saw that and wanted some protection.

The Government of Canada, the federal government, announced on February 22, 1972 their intent to establish an

8,500-square-mile national park in the Kluane area of the Yukon Territory, which was greeted by many Canadians with great pleasure. It described the new Kluane National Park as having spectacular mountain scenery which is remote yet accessible via the Alaska Highway. Here there are wide valleys, open slopes, many above timberline, dense populations of big game, mountain lakes, valley glaciers, the largest ice field in the world outside of polar regions, and it has the highest mountain range in North America, which is host to Canada's highest mountain, Mount Logan. The park borders on British Columbia to the south and Alaska to the west. It was finally established in 1976. It protects 21,980 square kilometres of Canada's Northern Coast Mountains Natural Region. Kluane abuts three other large protected areas: Wrangell-St. Elias, Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska, and British Columbia's Tatshenshini-Alsek Park, which are all part of the huge UNESCO World Heritage Site.

So much happens in Kluane: seeing the midnight sun, seeing the northern lights. There's hiking; you can fly in via small Cessna or a helicopter or backpack in. You go easy on a fun day trip or go hard on an extreme backcountry adventure. You can rent a canoe to use when you get to the lake to go fishing, or you can take your boat to Kathleen for world-class fishing, paddling, sneaking through towering valleys, sand dunes, and shifting ice floes, biking — zip down a single-track route along an old mining road. You'll feel like you're at the top of the world on a flightseeing excursion, the best way to comprehend the enormous scale of this park. February and March are the best months for dog sledding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, and backcountry camping for the hardy. All this — and it's hard not to see wildlife year-round in Kluane, famed for its healthy, diverse grizzly bears, black bears, moose, sheep, goats. I could go on and on, just to name a few. Canada's largest mountain has lots of mountaineers on it in the spring trying one of the toughest climbs in the world.

That's why I'm writing and that's why we're writing, and we should write to express the concerns regarding the workforce adjustments currently underway with Parks Canada and the potential impacts to the Yukon. Heard earlier, reports indicate that 58 employees representing 42 percent of Parks Canada's Yukon-based positions have been identified as affected through the current adjustment process. While details remain limited, the scale of these changes raises concerns about the future enforcement, stewardship, and operational capacity within Yukon parks and historic sites.

As the MLA for Kluane, I know for certain that Parks Canada employees in the Yukon do far more than just administer parks. They contribute to conservation, enforcement, ecological monitoring, scientific research, visitor services, and heritage protection. In communities such as mine — the community of Haines Junction, which is basically the base for Kluane National Park — they're our neighbours. They volunteer. They're valued contributors to local life. One more kid in minor hockey. Their knowledge, their experience, and their understanding of the land cannot easily be replaced. My neighbour for many years, now retired, was a park warden. I can't overstate how much that man taught me over the years about the national park and just about birds and things like that.

Significant reductions to this workforce could have implications for enforcement capacity, stewardship activities, long-term preservation of scientific and cultural knowledge. These functions are fundamental to effective management of Canada's national parks and historic sites. Remember earlier when I listed all the things you can do? If no one's there to monitor it — just saying. The Government of Canada has repeatedly emphasized the importance of Arctic sovereignty and northern security and maintaining a meaningful presence in the North. Achieving these objectives requires more than policy commitments. It requires experienced personnel living and working in northern communities. Parks Canada staff are part of that presence, helping to protect nationally significant landscapes, monitoring remote regions, and supporting Canada's presence in the North. At a time when Canada is placing greater emphasis on Arctic security and sovereignty, it is difficult to reconcile these priorities with significant reductions to the federal workforce in northern regions. A strong northern presence depends not only on policies and investments but also on experienced personnel living and working in northern communities. Effective stewardship, conservation, and enforcement require people on the ground.

Given the long-standing relationship between Parks Canada and Yukon First Nations in my riding — including Kluane First Nation, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, who co-manage Kluane National Park — it's imperative that affected First Nations and the Government of Yukon have meaningful opportunities to provide input before a final decision is implemented. I do respectfully request — and I think we all do in this House — clarification on how Parks intends to maintain its operations, stewardship, and enforcement responsibilities in the Yukon should those workforce reductions proceed and how these decisions align with the federal government's stated northern and Arctic objectives.

I had an opportunity to speak to my fellow colleague the Minister of Environment in the Northwest Territories and, of course, he's got a park, Fort Smith, and he's affected also — huge concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion today. I look forward to listening to the other members, especially those who have national parks in their ridings, and their perspective, and we will definitely be supporting this motion.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I want to thank the Member for Riverdale North for bringing this motion forward.

We heard last week in the news and from members in this House that Parks Canada employees in the Yukon have received notices about their positions. Just this afternoon as well, I received messages from friends and colleagues who have worked in Old Crow that are impacted in their current positions and communities, and it is turning out that the cost-cutting exercise of Parks Canada is going to quite disproportionately impact the Yukon. These are key jobs in Haines Junction, Dawson, Whitehorse, and Old Crow. In the Yukon, these jobs are steady and well-paid. They make a real difference to families in the community as a whole, and they are not easily replaced.

Now, I haven't heard yet if these cuts will directly impact any positions in Old Crow, but a reduction in budgets overall will undoubtedly limit resources available for Parks operations in our beautiful Vuntut National Park. I'll just read a quick note

just to share what we're thinking about in Old Crow. Vuntut National Park is one of Canada's most remote roadless wilderness areas located above the Arctic Circle in Northern Yukon. It encompasses 4,345 square kilometres of unglaciated Arctic tundra, peat bogs, and mountains. It borders the Ivvavik National Park and Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, where our caribou are born.

I'm just thinking about, as our minister and Premier send letters, that these parks — that community members that we're speaking on today — there are co-management agreements with Canada and for example, the Vuntut Gwitchin — theirs was established in 1995 under the *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement*; it's cooperatively managed by Parks Canada, Vuntut Gwitchin government, and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council. This is very important, because these *Umbrella Final Agreement* and co-management agreements, are all going to be impacted on shared responsibilities.

All three parties have said in this House that they are concerned. The Minister of Environment has said he will write to our Member of Parliament and to federal ministers. A letter from the Premier to the Prime Minister would carry the full weight of this government, and I think Yukoners would appreciate that level of advocacy on this issue.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I rise today to recognize this motion and in support of this motion and the commitment and work of Parks Canada staff in the territory and to highlight the importance of this partnership to the territory's cultural and tourism sector. Parks Canada has long been a core experience for visitors to the territory. They support the visitor experience through interpretation of our incredible environment and diverse culture. In addition to that and other roles, they represent the environmental stewardship to the territory, as mentioned by my colleagues here today.

The departments of Environment and Economy, Tourism and Culture work regularly with Parks Canada in communities across the Yukon. This includes integrated space-sharing agreements with Dawson City and Haines Junction and more recently Whitehorse. In Dawson City and Haines Junction, these long-standing partnerships support a collaborative approach to service delivery. They are co-located and offer complementary services to our visitors. Their shared goal is to make sure visitors have a positive and seamless experience under one roof. In Whitehorse, our long-standing partnership continues to grow through advancing space-sharing agreements that will improve visitor services and help both governments deliver them more efficiently. Next summer, we anticipate this relationship to grow in Whitehorse as the VIC opens up more space to Parks Canada services.

These are just a few examples of how integrated Parks Canada services are to Yukon Government services across the economic opportunities as well as the environmental stewardship and interpretation of the territory. Together, Parks Canada and Yukon Government work together to provide positive experiences and interpret our world-class Yukon and tell those stories as visitors arrive. It is important that we continue to support Parks Canada and the staff who have done this work and acknowledge the role in tourism, culture, and the business economy. I support this motion and the voices of the communities and want to ensure that those voices are heard.

Brent McDonald: I rise to speak to this motion on behalf of the people of the Klondike and on behalf of every Yukon community that hosts a Parks Canada site. On October 20, Parks Canada sent letters to 2,917 of its employees across the country, telling them their jobs are affected. The agency plans to eliminate about 500 full-time positions to meet $145 million in cuts over the next three years.

Here in the Yukon, 58 of 137 Parks Canada employees have received those letters. That is more than four in 10. In the Yukon and Northwest Territories together, about 45 percent of Parks Canada staff are affected, while roughly 17 percent of positions are being cut nationally. Once again, the North is being asked to carry more than its share. Parks Canada manages three national parks in the Yukon: Kluane National Park and Reserve, home to Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak, co-managed with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Kluane First Nation; Vuntut National Park, in the traditional territory of the Vuntut Gwitchin, near Old Crow; and Ivvavik National Park on the North Slope, created through the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. It manages the Chilkoot Trail National Historic Site, the route of stampeders over the Coast Mountains; the *SS Klondike* National Historic Site, the sternwheeler on the bank of the Yukon River here, an iconic symbol of Whitehorse; and in my own community, the Klondike National Historic Sites.

The Dawson Historical Complex, the *SS Keno*, Dredge No. 4, Discovery Claim, the Bear Creek Gold Room, many townsite buildings — it's where the gold rush began. These sites sit within a larger story. In 2023, the Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage Site was inscribed by UNESCO. This is the result of years of work led by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and it tells a story of a First Nation that adapted to, survived, and endured the upheaval of the gold rush and colonization. The world now recognizes this story as being of value to all of humanity. Parks Canada is Canada's lead agency for world heritage. These cuts arrived barely three years after the world told us this place really matters. Heritage interpretation is how we understand and learn from the past. It helps us understand how our communities and how our country came to be the way they are, and it helps us avoid repeating mistakes of the past so that we can build a better future.

In recent years, Parks Canada has been working to tell more honest, balanced stories about the dark and uncomfortable truths, particularly our relationships with Indigenous peoples. As an agency of the very government responsible for the policies and actions that caused this harm, Parks Canada has an obligation to keep telling these stories. These are not easy stories to tell. They are complicated, nuanced, and emotional. They are difficult to tell and difficult to hear. For many, they are deeply personal, and for some, they challenge long-held and treasured beliefs about our country, our past, and our present. That kind of communication requires skilled professionals, people who can guide difficult, emotionally charged conversations with accuracy, compassion, care, and unflinching honesty. We cannot outsource that work to AI, to signs, or to apps.

Park wardens are part of Canada's law enforcement officers. They protect wildlife and species at risk, deal with poaching, keep the peace, and support public safety across some of the most remote country in Canada. They work

alongside the RCMP and other agencies in joint patrols across the North. The Yukon already has very few of them.

Reporting last week confirmed that the warden detachment in Kluane National Park is one of 13 detachments across the country set to close. When a detachment closes, there is no longer any law enforcement on the ground in that park. Enforcement will depend on wardens travelling in from Outside. Even their union has asked what this means for response times, for travel distances, and for a warden who needs backup in a remote place and finds none. These are fair questions, and Yukoners deserve answers. This comes as Canada has committed to protecting 30 percent of its lands and waters by 2030, and as a new national park is planned for the Peel watershed, we are asked to believe that more protected land can be looked after by fewer people.

Parks Canada workers are woven into the fabric of our communities, especially our rural communities in Haines Junction, Dawson City, and Old Crow. A Parks Canada job is often a year-round living-wage job in places where those are hard to find. These workers and their families shop at the local grocery store, the hardware store. They eat at local restaurants. They volunteer at community events. They coach hockey, figure skating, run youth programs, sit on school councils and boards, and bring their kids to every activity in our community.

When a family like that leaves, a community loses more than a job; it loses students at the school, players on the team, volunteers at fundraisers, and customers who keep small businesses open through the winter. This is not happening in isolation. It is one of a more cumulative effect on communities that are already struggling to keep families. Rising costs, housing that's hard to find, diminishing education programs, services getting harder to reach — each loss makes the next one more likely. Rural communities do not disappear all at once; they wear away one family at a time.

This House has been here before. In 2012, Parks Canada cut 30 positions here in the Yukon. At that time, guided tours at the Klondike and Dredge No. 4 ended, and search and rescue capacity in Kluane was again reduced. Members of this Assembly from all parties unanimously passed a motion urging Ottawa to reconsider, and I ask the members to do the same here today. Heritage is not a cost to be cut. It's an investment in who we are and who we want to become. Safety in our parks is not a luxury, and the families who hold this work together also hold our communities together.

I was just texted a message that kind of sums it up in a nutshell from a resident in the Klondike, and they say: "What kind of a two-bit country can't afford to protect its own heritage?"

I urge all members to support this motion and send a clear, united message to Ottawa from this House.

Justin Ziegler: I rise in support of this motion brought forward by my colleague the Member for Riverdale North.

I came to the Yukon at the end of 2018, and a few months later in 2019, I hiked the whole Chilkoot Trail. I was new here, and I did not know much about this place yet. Along the trail, Parks Canada staff explained what happened there: the gold rush, the thousands of people who carried their supplies over the pass, and the First Nation people who used this trail long before the gold rush for trade. I came out of that hike understanding the Yukon in a new way. Since then, I have visited Dawson City, the dredge, the *SS Klondike*, and Kluane. In Dawson, I took the tours. In Kluane, staff helped me understand the land I was walking on, and every time, it was a person who made the place come alive.

I don't have to travel far to think about it, and I think none of us have to travel far to think about it. From our office window, we can see the *SS Klondike*. Every summer, I see the visitors walking up to it and the staff waiting to welcome them and tell them its story. It reminds me every day that Parks Canada is in the wilderness and also right here in the middle of our city.

In 2024, I became a Canadian citizen at Shipyards Park here in Whitehorse. At the ceremony, new citizens learn about a program called Canoo, and this program gave us one year of free entry to Parks Canada places across the country. It's a beautiful gift. It says: Welcome. — now go and see your country. But here in the Yukon, I did not need the pass. Our parks are open; anyone can walk in. What makes a visit special here is the person who tells you the story, the person who tells you where the bears are, the person who explains why this place matters and to whom it belongs. That is what Parks Canada staff gave me as a newcomer.

Every year, new people arrive in the Yukon and new citizens take their oath, and I want them to be welcomed the same way I was. That welcome needs people. Parks Canada places bring visitors from all over the world. Those visitors sleep in our hotels, eat in our restaurants, and hire our guides. In communities like Haines Junction and Dawson, Parks Canada jobs are steady, year-round jobs. That means families who stay, children in the local school, volunteers in the community — and when these jobs leave a small community, they do not come back very easily. These are also the people who watch over the land, the wildlife, and the historic buildings. That work is quiet, and unfortunately, we only notice it when it stops.

Now, I want to speak about something that makes Parks Canada in the Yukon different. I have one question: Do these cuts go against any treaty or agreement Canada has signed with Yukon First Nations? Parks Canada has called its work with First Nations "Healing Broken Connections". That was a quote. Will that work be harmed when there are fewer people to do it? Parks Canada said that they will look first at sites with low visitation. Vuntut will never have big crowds. Is a park created by a treaty going to be judged by how many visitors it gets? When these cuts are discussed, will First Nations be at the table? I think these questions should be answered by Ottawa.

Parks Canada has to serve visitors in both official languages. That means it needs people who speak French in Kluane, in Dawson, on the Chilkoot, and here in Whitehorse. In a territory where French speakers are a minority, these jobs matter. They bring bilingual people into our communities. Sometimes they bring francophone families who stay, who put their children in our schools, who take part in community life. When those jobs are cut, who loses service in French? A family from Québec or New Brunswick on a road trip north, a visitor from France, Belgium, or Switzerland who came all this way for our wilderness, a newcomer from a francophone country in Africa discovering their new home, a Yukon francophone family taking their children to Kluane for the weekend, and students from our French schools and French immersion

programs who should be able to hear about their own territory in French. The francophone community loses people it counts on.

Since 2023, the federal *Official Languages Act* asked federal institutions to look at how their decisions affect minority language communities and to find ways to reduce the harm. Did Parks Canada look at what these cuts mean for the Yukon's francophone community? I hope the Premier's letter will ask that question too. This motion asks something simple. It asks the Premier to tell Ottawa that the Yukon needs its Parks Canada staff. I hope the Premier writes that letter. I hope it's a strong letter written with the First Nations. I hope the minister of tourism will also add her voice to this debate. She did, and I thank her for that. I will be voting in favour.

Kate White: I appreciate all that's been shared today in the Assembly, especially when — let's be frank — being vulnerable in a public space feels really vulnerable. But I can assure folks that I've had text messages from the Klondike saying that they were sniffling listening in today.

I appreciate the reminder that Yukon has faced this in 2012 and we made a decision then to respond in an all-Assembly, all-representative way, and I think it's really important. I appreciate the willingness of all members to recognize the importance of the letter coming from the Premier to the Prime Minister, and I especially thank the Member for Kluane for holding off what I was told was a letter hot out of his hands and ready to go, and so I thank him for that.

I just want to add a couple points about the meaningful impacts that Parks Canada staff have in the territory and listening to my colleague the Member for Riverdale North speak about growing up so close to those five parks and how that becomes part of your identity. I think, well, growing up in the city of Whitehorse, they didn't quite have the same proximity, but I think about heading out toward Kluane and when you get that first sight of that range and you feel how small and insignificant you are on the planet and how important that is. I think about the absolute treasure that is the Klondike and echo the words shared by my colleague about the importance of the work done by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Parks Canada in getting that designated as a site. I think about the importance of the people who were on the ground, whether they're biologists in Kluane, whether they're interpreters sharing the stories, and I think particularly about one experience that visitors are able to do in the Klondike called Red Serge, Red Tape, and I mention this one specifically because I think, in the Yukon, we really forget the privilege of where we are and the understanding that we have in the world and understanding some of the history.

A couple years ago, I had the opportunity and I went to go participate in the tour of the commissioner's residence for the Red Serge, Red Tape presentation. The reason why I highlight this one is this one specifically talks about colonization and the effect on Yukon First Nation people during the Klondike Gold Rush and the incredible work that is done by those who share those stories, because they have to be ready for questions. Some of those questions come not from a place of cruelty, but they come from a place of misunderstanding or a lack of knowledge. So, to be able to participate in that specific tour — the Red Serge, Red Tape — but to be there with people who aren't from the Yukon, to see the stories, to see them learning some of the history of the Klondike Gold Rush as it was being shared and watching them try to process that information and knowing that it's done in such a way that people are able to ask questions and that the guides do such an incredible job, the park staff do such an incredible job of making sure that those conversations feel both safe and respectful all at the same time — really, we're all here and we all recognize, we understand that's the risk — that we're losing those incredibly valuable community members across the territory who care deeply about the work and the places that they work.

I'm grateful that this is another 2012.2 where the Assembly as a whole will reach out to the federal government and say how important Parks Canada and Parks Canada staff are to our territory, and I appreciate very much the discussion today. I've said before and I'll say it again: We don't always agree, but sometimes when we do agree, there is magic in that, right? This is an example. This is an indication to every Yukoner and every riding, those who will be directly affected or who have received those letters and their families, the communities where those letters are circulating, for them to know that each of us stands not only beside them but behind them, and we'll do our part in trying to make sure that they stay with that work that they're doing.

I appreciate the time today and the words that have been shared by my colleagues, and I'm looking forward to seeing that letter and the response from it.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Carmen Gustafson: I do want to thank the members who spoke in favour of the motion and for their heartfelt support for our very cherished national parks and historic sites as well as support for fellow Yukoners, whether they be in Old Crow, Dawson city, Haines Junction, Whitehorse, or anywhere else, working to support those sites and keep them so special. I thank the members for that.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Division

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Agree.
Hon. Scott Kent: Agree.
Hon. Cory Bellmore: Agree.
Hon. Brad Cathers: Agree.
Hon. Ted Laking: Agree.
Patti McLeod: Agree.
Hon. Laura Lang: Agree.
Hon. Jen Gehmair: Agree.
Hon. Wade Istchenko: Agree.
Adam Gerle: Agree.
Doris Anderson: Agree.
Tyler Porter: Agree.

Kate White: Agree.
Lane Tredger: Agree.
Brent McDonald: Agree.
Linda Moen: Agree.
Carmen Gustafson: Agree.
Justin Ziegler: Accord.
Debra-Leigh Reti: Agree.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are 19 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.
I declare the motion carried.
Motion No. 196 agreed to

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre:

THAT the Third Reading and passage of Bill No. 8, entitled *Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act (2026)*, be rescinded and the bill be recommitted to Committee of the Whole pursuant to Standing Order 59(4).

Lane Tredger: My party and I brought forward this motion today. It's an unusual motion. It's unusual that after a bill has passed Third Reading in this House, has been voted on by a majority of the members in favour, that we would then go backwards and take it back to Committee to reconsider it again. But I believe that in this situation, it is indeed warranted.

The first reason I want to bring forward that we have not fully considered this bill and need to is that the standard to which this bill was supported in debate, that information about this bill was shared in debate, is not up to the usual standard of this House. During debate, the Yukon Party refused to answer questions. They provided incorrect information and then refused to answer follow-ups about that information. They continued to provide that same incorrect information even after it was pointed out that it was wrong. They were unfamiliar with previous engagements on the issues, these exact issues around rental controls and no-cause evictions.

The Yukon Party couldn't or wouldn't answer questions about the results of previous engagements or how those had been considered. They admitted that they hadn't consulted with the Council of Yukon First Nations or any individual Yukon First Nation. They admitted that they had not consulted with the Association of Yukon Communities or the City of Whitehorse or any other Yukon municipality. They admitted that they had not met with a single stakeholder organization, not a single housing organization, not a single chamber of commerce.

They claimed that they had spoken to landlords, but they wouldn't say how many or tell us what was in those conversations. The minister said that she had received e-mails in support of this legislation, but she couldn't tell us how many. She said she couldn't remember.

The Yukon Party has very thoroughly demonstrated that they don't understand the current housing landscape in the Yukon by incorrectly representing the scope of housing organizations. They said that they didn't request a jurisdictional scan on these issues. They said they didn't know how many landlords or tenants or rental units are in the territory, so they had no idea how many people would be affected by this legislation.

The Minister of Community Services gave answers that could be proven wrong very simply by reading the Yukon Housing website, for example. When she was pressed for details, she said to ask Yukon Housing. When I asked the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation for follow-up, he looked at his desk and the Minister of Community Services got up and failed to answer the question again.

Perhaps the most egregious thing that happened was during debate. I pointed out that this law will change the notice requirements for rent increases for people who share a home with their landlord. Currently, people who share a bathroom or kitchen with their landlord have to get a three-month notice before the rent can be increased, and it can only be increased once every 12 months. This law will remove that protection, which was surprising, because that hadn't been mentioned anywhere in the conversations about the law. It was not mentioned in Second Reading. It was not mentioned in general debate in Committee of the Whole. It was not mentioned in the written description of what the law does and not in any of the public statements or comments from the Yukon Party about this law. I brought it up, and it was pretty obvious in the debate that this was news to the Yukon Party that their law did this, that they had been completely unaware until I raised it in debate that it happened. But this didn't dissuade them. I asked what the justification for this change was, and the minister said, "I think that there are likely reasons for that."

I have already made all these arguments in Third Reading. The Yukon Party has already heard this from me, so this information in and of itself is not a reason to go back and consider the bill again. But I do have new information that needs to be considered by this House. Hundreds of Yukoners have written to this government about the bill, and more than a hundred have written to oppose this bill since it passed Third Reading. That's a huge letter-writing campaign.

I want to ask everyone here to think about the last time, before they were elected, that they wrote a letter to the minister, that they wrote a letter to the government. I think I was a fairly engaged political person before I was elected, and I think I did that maybe a handful of times in my life. I think that it is a very unusual step for most people to take to write a letter to their government, and that is something they have to feel very deeply and very strongly. For hundreds of Yukoners in this incredibly short period of time to do that, I think is very significant.

I can only speak to the letters that we've been cc'd on. I'm sure the minister has received many more that I'm unaware of. Nearly all the letters that we have received opposed the changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act*. I do want to say that there was one we received that did support the changes, and I want to acknowledge that, because I think it's important that we acknowledge that there's not consensus, that we do acknowledge that there are viewpoints that are different from our own. Some of the letters we received supported pieces of the changes but suggested tweaks or alterations, and I'll quote some of those later. But most of the letters we received opposed this amendment altogether.

Many of the letter writers told me that they received a form response from the minister, so I am not at all confident that she has considered this input from Yukoners, that she shared it with

her Cabinet colleagues, with her caucus colleagues. To be honest, I don't know if she's read them at all or if she just had one of her staff members send a form reply.

When Yukoners are so moved by an issue that they take the time to write to the government, it is critical that we listen to that input. Today we're going to take the time to do that. We're going to take the time to consider the voices of Yukoners, the voices of Yukoners who have taken time out of their day to give us this input. Since there was no consultation on these amendments, we do have the voices of hundreds of Yukoners, and I'm going to read them to us here so that we can consider them properly as is our duty, as we were elected to do.

There is a lot of common ground among the letters. I'm not going to read out every single letter; I'm just going to provide some of the common information and then some of the things that were individual among the letters. Here's the first one:

"Dear Minister Bellmore, I am a concerned Yukoner —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Minister of Health and Social Services, on a point of order.

Hon. Brad Cathers: I believe the member contravened the Standing Orders by identifying a member by name — specifically, my colleague the Minister of Community Services.

Lane Tredger: I did indeed quote, and I will rephrase with the member's proper title.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I will remind members again that members must refer to one another by their title, position, or constituency.

Let's proceed.

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

Lane Tredger: This letter is addressed to the Minister of Community Services and says: "I am a concerned Yukoner writing to urge you and your government to reconsider the proposed amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* that would end rent control and implement no-cause evictions. These changes are set to take effect on December 1 of this year, just as Yukoners head into winter and the holidays. I am asking you to: share with Yukoners what data was used to make this decision, keep a limit on annual rent increases that reflects the cost of living, do not allow no-cause evictions in the Yukon. Safe, stable housing should be one of the Yukon Government's top priorities. As the minister, you have a responsibility to all Yukoners, including the thousands of Yukoners who are renters. I hope you will support Yukon renters and stop Bill No. 8. I look forward to your response."

That's the end of that letter, and I'd like to turn now to some pieces of the letters that were not covered in that letter that are more individual. This one is also addressed to the Minister of Community Services — quote: "Before the amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act are made, the Yukon Government should share why these decisions were made — what data were used, and why were no other options considered? Yukon Government should also share why they are making these changes — I assume they are made to benefit the landlord, but how have the Yukon Government considered the tenant in these decisions? The Yukon Party campaigned on making life affordable. Please provide a detailed breakdown of how these amendments will make life affordable for Yukoners. Directly from your platform last year, the Yukon Party stated: we will increase the supply of rental housing by … Developing a plan that recognizes rent control has failed, and balances the needs of both tenants and landlords, while increasing supply and making rent more affordable through updates to the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

"Please provide details as to how the proposed amendments balance the needs of both tenants and landlords? Currently, the amendments appear to only balance the needs of landlords. Please provide an update on all of the points of your housing platform. There are 14 points to this platform and Yukoners should be aware of the status of each platform point. Please justify why no-cause evictions are the only solution that you have proposed. How does this benefit the majority of Yukoners? How does this help Yukoners during the winter?"

Here's the third letter: "Do not end rent control. And in winter, really? Is that a plan that supports young working Yukoners?" Later in the letter, this person writes: "I am most concerned about young working people, who I have been watching for the last decade trying to cobble together viable rental living arrangements in Whitehorse … I am very skeptical Bill No. 8 will balance supply and demand in the Yukon rental market. Please provide evidence, not ideology, for this bill."

Another letter reads, "As a citizen of the Yukon I see homelessness every day in our city. The lack of affordable housing for those who need it is a huge problem and needs to be addressed effectively and with compassion. Eliminating rent control and no-cause evictions will only make the problem worse for those living precariously and in need of safe stable housing.

"If you sincerely believe this is justifiable then surely you would have no problem letting the electorate know what factual information your Party has based this decision upon. And surely limiting rent increases to the cost of living increases should be a reasonable policy, otherwise this is just huge boon to landlords and no-one else. Please re-consider how many you will hurt with passage of Bill 8 as it stands and stop it. Thank you on behalf of the so many vulnerable people and families in our community."

Another —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Scott Kent: I wanted to wait until the member had concluded reading from the letter — in the gap. It is practice in this House when members are reading from a letter to table those letters. I would just ask for a ruling. The member opposite referred to this as "new information". I recognize a number of letters were tabled earlier on in this Sitting, but since this is new information, as they referenced, I would ask that the member table those letters for the House.

Speaker: Member for Whitehorse Centre, have these letters been tabled?

Lane Tredger: Madam Speaker, they have not been tabled, but I am happy to table them.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: It has been the practice in this House to table documents. I have asked the Member for Whitehorse Centre and she confirmed that these letters have not yet been tabled.

Standing Order 38(1) says, "Documents Tabled … Any return, report or other paper required to be tabled in the Assembly in accordance with an Act or pursuant to any resolution or Standing Order of this Assembly shall be tabled during Tabling Returns and Documents."

Since the Member for Whitehorse Centre declared that the member will table the new information, let's proceed.

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

Lane Tredger: I will continue with another letter, and as mentioned, these are letters that have been received by the Minister of Community Services as well, and I want to make sure that everyone knows about them. This letter reads: "Yukoners deserve better than to worry about not being able to pay unreasonable rent increases and the threat of being evicted. When cost of living are already sky high, increasing rental costs, which affects disproportionally lower income households, is cruel. I implore you to think of the consequences for everyday Yukoners who will suffer the consequences of this legislation."

Another letter reads: "I am a renter who is on disability due to chronic illness. My general living situation is tenuous enough. I am afraid of what no rent control and no-cause evictions could mean for me and so many other vulnerable people — and for all Yukon renters. Housing instability is a major contributor to mental health issues, among many, many other problems. Please help Yukon renters stay in their homes for their health, safety and quality of life."

I want to include this one, because this is someone who does actually speak to the need for balance between landlords and tenants, and among other things, she says, "Do not allow no-cause evictions in the Yukon — I support reflection and strategizing on eviction notices that protect landlords from bad tenants. Let's figure it out".

This person writes: "I implore you to consider the next generation of Yukon residents and renters. The youth who are currently in school and graduating this year will be transitioning to this realm of adulthood. I believe it is important to consider our future generation in these decisions and set them up for success. What kind of message does it send to an impressionable mind if we forego protections in the *Residential Tenancies Act* that could prevent them from housing destabilization in their lifetime. The cost of rent for a single room as it stands for a single individual is disproportionate to what young professionals are currently earning. The other stressor being that there are not enough accessible/affordable housing units for young adults transitioning to adulthood in the Yukon."

This person wrote: "I'm a senior who would like to sell my small house and move into an apartment but the price to rent an apartment or condo is really high. I could not get any apartment/condo owner to agree to a long-term rent contract. I won't sell my house to go into an apartment when I could be asked to pay more for my apartment and/or have to leave after one year. Then what? Where would I live after spending all that money to move into an apartment?"

The next letter I want to read — I'm going to read in its entirety. It's quite a powerful letter: "There's something about a Yukon winter that has a way of reminding us what really matters. When the temperature drops to minus forty and the darkness settles in, the idea of home becomes a whole lot more than four walls and a roof. It's warmth. It's security. It's knowing that, whatever the world throws at you, there's a place where you belong. Which brings me to Bill 8. I understand the argument that removing rent controls and allowing no-cause evictions might encourage investment in rental housing. The theory, I suppose, is that if we make the business of being a landlord more attractive, more housing will follow. Maybe. But I can't help wondering whether we're confusing the business of housing with the purpose of housing. See, the problem in Yukon isn't that renters have too much security. It's that we don't have enough homes. And making the ones we have less secure or potentially more expensive doesn't strike me as much of a solution. There's an old economic idea that if you let the market do its thing, supply will eventually catch up with demand. And sometimes it does. But markets have a funny habit of being more interested in what people can pay than in what people actually need. And shelter, Minister, isn't exactly optional. Especially up here. That's why I believe we ought to put more energy into non-market housing. Public housing, housing cooperatives, non-profit developments - homes built and maintained primarily to house people rather than generate returns on an investment. Build enough of those, and you don't just help the people who live in them. You give the private rental market some competition, ease the pressure on demand, and potentially bring rents down across the board. I'm not suggesting private landlords don't have a place in the picture. They do. But perhaps we shouldn't leave something as fundamental as a roof over our heads almost entirely to the pursuit of profit.

"So, before we head down the road Bill 8 proposes, I'd like to ask a few things. What evidence tells us that removing rent controls will actually make housing more affordable? Why should a tenant lose the security of knowing they can remain in their home without cause for eviction? And why aren't we putting considerably more effort into building housing that remains affordable regardless of what the market happens to be doing? I'd like to see annual rent increases remain tied to the cost of living, protections against no-cause evictions preserved, and non-market housing made a much greater priority.

"December 1 is an unfortunate time to introduce greater uncertainty into people's lives. Winter is setting in. The holidays are approaching. And for a lot of Yukoners, the question of whether they can afford to stay in their homes is already weighing heavily enough. I suppose what I'm getting at is this: a home is not just a commodity. It's where people build their lives, raise their families, and find a little peace at the end of the day. And in a place like Yukon, where we depend on each other more than we sometimes care to admit, that ought to count for something. I hope you'll reconsider Bill 8."

Another writer says: "As a concerned Yukoner, whose been working in the social services field for over 6 years. I have

seen firsthand what housing instability does to people and the community. Which is why I am writing to urge you and your government to terminate the proposed amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* that would end rent control and implement no cause-evictions. We as a community, as Yukoners and as human beings must protect and care for one another."

Another writer asks for the government to look into the *Territorial Youth Strategy* by the Yukon Territorial Youth Collective and the living wage report 2026 from the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition for current impacts of the housing crisis. This person says, "The Yukon is facing a housing crisis. Now is not the time to decrease protections for renters. If your government moves forward with these changes, thousands of Yukoners will suffer because they will not be able to afford housing for them or their families. It will increase homelessness, increase burdens on social services such as the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, and take away renters' already tenuous sense of security about having a roof over their heads and a place to raise their children safely. The only benefit will be making a few already wealthy people wealthier. If your government has data that proves otherwise, I would like to see it."

This person again refers back to the Yukon *Territorial Youth Strategy*: "This government has signed on and committed to the *Territorial Youth Strategy* where one of the top calls to action is housing security. Allowing rental raises with no cap with certainly make housing unaffordable for young people in the territory. You have a duty and commitment to Yukon youth to make housing affordable and accessible and this bill will do the opposite of that."

This person wrote: "I ask what benefit this is meant to provide, and what data do you have that removing rental caps will help anyone? The Yukon already has some of the weakest protections in the country and it has not done us any good. Increasing the notice for rental increases from 3 months to 6 months is not adequate - if housing costs go up, it won't matter if I have 3 months or 6 months to find a new place, because everything will be too expensive. I make a good wage and am still struggling.

"Please explain, in detail, what the government means when it says that removing rent caps will attract more developers. Is it because developers will be attracted to the possibility of more profits? What good does more housing do if it's all unaffordable? This belief that it will eventually stabilize and the market will correct itself is a fantasy."

The next person writes: "As someone who has worked with marginalized and vulnerable populations in housing, I am deeply concerned about who these new amendments will affect most. Housing is a basic human right and housing stability should be protected by our government, not taken away. No cause evictions are harmful and will cause more homelessness in the Yukon. I hope you're ready to address that."

This person wrote: "I am a born and raised Yukon senior citizen. I am a very concerned Yukoner writing to urge you and your government to reconsider the proposed amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* that would end rent control and implement no cause-evictions. I live in Northland Trailer Park and have witnessed the pad rent go up every single year. I recall once the reason was because the roads were going to be paved. We still drive over gravel potholes. The portion of Range Road that goes by our homes is not paved. We drive over those potholes year after year too. Mountainview Place has paved streets, the new development going in behind us has paved streets and there is pavement covering range road at both the entrances and exits of the new development. There is chip sealed road all the way to Whistle Bend. We pay taxes and we are homeowners too. Many of us have paid rent to the landlord and then in addition, spent our own money on beautifying our yards which are in fact the property of the landlord. Are we considered second class citizens? The only affordable housing right now is a mobile home. I emphasize that I am a senior on a fixed income. The price of gas had risen, the price of electricity has risen, the price of meat has risen. I can guarantee that without the rent cap, our pad rental fees will rise even more than they can be right now. We are even being charged storage fees for an RV that is parked in the driveway that we already pay rent for."

This person wrote: "While I acknowledge that landlords need protection, landlords have more power than tenants. One of government's core values should be to protect those most vulnerable. Tenants are much more vulnerable than landlords and therefore require more protection." Later in that letter, they write: "Housing is a fundamental pillar upon which the health of our population is built. Rent prices in the Yukon are already overinflated compared to our population and especially compared to the wages of renters."

This person wrote: "I am also a landlord … Did you meet with the folks at Safe and Home to see how this would affect our most vulnerable? I run a business downtown and heard first-hand from staff how disheartening this decision was to their organization — and how it will ultimately leave more Yukoners unhoused / homeless / under-housed."

This person wrote: "A lack of rent control deeply concerns me as a senior. My husband and I have already had to move out of Whitehorse because we cannot afford the rental rate in Whitehorse. Yet that would be the most appropriate place for us to live in order to have access to medical and other requirements." That person is writing from one of the Yukon communities outside of Whitehorse.

This person said: "I also understand the Yukon Government formally endorsed A Place to Be: Community Action Plan to end Homelessness. How does Bill 8 hold up the Governments endorsement of that plan?"

The next letter I think is one of the ones that moved me the most as I read through them, and it's by a young person who writes: "Having grown up in the Yukon, I wholeheartedly believe there is no better place than home. I spend part of the year away at school, and while I am grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow in a new place, I cannot wait to come back. My plan has always been to return to the Yukon after I graduate; I look forward to giving back to the place I love that has given me so much. Unfortunately, decisions by your government such as this one make me reconsider that future. As someone entering the workforce in a time of significant uncertainty and growing unaffordability, I know I will be renting for a long time to come. It is incredibly difficult to imagine a version of the Yukon that doesn't feel like home, and I worry that will be the case for me and many others returning from school. These amendments will result in exorbitant rent prices that I fear I will not be able to afford on an entry-level

salary." She says, "I hope you will consider the impact this has on individual Yukoners like me who want nothing more than to come home. Please stop Bill No. 8."

This person wrote: "I am a disabled single parent, a victim of gender-based violence, and concerned Yukoner who has been unhoused twice in the last 5 years, at one point having to resort to living for 3 months in a rundown bus with no door in Ibex valley. I am writing to urge you and your government to cancel the proposed amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* that would end rent control and implement no cause-evictions. These changes set to take effect just as we head into winter."

The next person writes: "These changes are not based on any evidence presented to the legislature or the people of Yukon. They appear to be driven by a desire to please landlords who are already privileged. Given that the changes in legislation are set to take effect on December 1st of this year, they will be especially punitive on renters heading into one of the most expensive times of the year - winter & the holidays. As a government who is responsible to the people, you should share with Yukoners what data was used to make this decision. As people who should show compassion for others, you should keep a limit on annual rent increases so they don't add to the soaring the cost of living. As leaders who seek to curb the greed of the wealthy and care for all, please do not allow no-cause evictions in the Yukon."

This person wrote: "I am a hard working government employee and a born and raised Yukoner. If something doesn't change with the cost of rent, utilities etc I as well as so many other life long Yukoners will be forced to move out of our beloved Yukon Territory. My family has been here for generations and in my generation we have seen so many financial impacts that are effecting people negatively, one of them being the cost of housing and lack of availability. If you remove the rent caps on top of the many cost of living increases we are currently experiencing it's going to send people into extreme financial hardship. I am a one income household and if my rent goes up I will be faced with the unfortunate choice of going broke or relocating. This is a choice I shouldn't have to make at my age when I work full time and am a fully functioning member of society. Please rethink what you are doing and how many people it's going to negatively impact. There has to be another way."

This person writes: "I personally have struggled to find affordable housing while working to support folks who are hard to house. Rent control means Yukon remains affordable for all. Please lead with your heart on this and all your party decided. People need an affordable place to live."

This person wrote: "I am a Yukoner, and a renter. The state of renting in the Yukon has become on par with the rest of the busy rat-race world, where comfortable apartments and liveable housing is beyond reach to many full time employed adults. Rent hikes are profit driven and do not help the community to thrive, reduce art and culture, and will cause even higher housing shortage and struggle.

"To allow no-cause evictions is an absolutely inhumane use of power, over people who are helpless and struggling. No-cause evictions will not make homeowners and landlords see and pay for less damage to property. It will not ease the housing crisis, and it will not better people's lives, instead promoting kicking people to the curb in a very non-Yukoner way, replacing genuine human connection and care with what is simply a cash grab. Combined, these two amendments will destabilize families, deepen the struggle to get by for everyday workers, contribute hugely to homelessness, destroy mental health, and quite simply, ruin many lives. Renters must be protected! They are the backbone of the workforce, they are families, they are elders."

This person wrote: "I have been fortunate to have a decent job and have had reasonable rental rates for the last few years, though I note we always thought it felt like karma because our first few years felt impossible here. We had so many obstacles trying to find decent and affordable housing due to it being the wild, wild west with hardly any rental availability, no rent cap and no cause evictions. We once had a verbal agreement and email confirmation with someone, gave notice to our landlord and then when we met with the new landlord they asked where we worked and put the rent up by $400/month and had us sign off on that lease. And we had to because there were no other options. I wish I were making that story up, but I wouldn't believe it. I absolutely also believe that landlords also deserve to have rights and appreciate the need for things to change but this feels like going back in time. There has to be a better way, i.e. a reasonable rent cap! If you've ever been a renter in Whitehorse, you would absolutely understand the valid concerns here. People are already paying exorbitant amounts on rooms and otherwise shared accommodation and there are a few terrible landlords in town, just like anywhere else. There has to be a better path forward, one with more respect and consideration of both the renters and the privileged, who not only own homes in this economy, but have rentals and tenants. Based on the cost to buy, owning is out of reach for many and this feels like harming the vulnerable more than anyone else. Based on what I heard in the legislature today, it also is without consulting so many vital organizations like the Anti-Poverty Coalition and Women's Council. I appreciate that things always change but not having balanced consultations with something that ought to be a human right such as housing, is a problem. While I will be inconvenienced and feel vulnerable with these changes as a renter, I worry more about those people who don't have good jobs in this economy that's already tough as nails to slog through for so many. I hope you take the concerns of everyone at the table to heart."

This person wrote: "In 2023, 20 days before Christmas I received an eviction notice because my new landlord, who had bought the house I was living in, said that he wanted to move into the small, cold, basement apartment I had been in for the just two years ago called home. While it was clear that he had no intention of moving in (something my next door neighbour later confirmed), it was not difficult for him to kick me out. I was in my first year of teaching and already finding life stressful and this was an added stress I did not need. I cannot imagine what even fewer protections will mean for tenants. People cannot thrive or even stay afloat without housing security. By creating a system where tenants can be kicked out of their homes at the whims of their landlord, you are creating greater class divides than we already have. Why should housing security and the right to safe enjoyment of one''s home only belong to people who can get a mortgage?"

The next person writes: "Research shows that investing in housing stability and reducing barriers to housing can help reduce costs in other areas, including health care and emergency services. Housing insecurity has real consequences for individuals, families, and our public systems. If fiscal responsibility is truly a priority for this government, then decisions about housing policy should be evidence-based and consider the long-term costs, not just the immediate financial implications. Undermining housing stability while claiming to prioritize fiscal responsibility risks being a costly short-sighted approach. Stable housing is an investment in Yukoners and in the long-term sustainability of our public services."

This person wrote: "I am extremely fortunate to be a home owner in the Yukon. I was lucky to be able to afford a house when the market was low. But things have changed and so many Yukoners are forced to be renters. I am writing to urge you and your government to reconsider the proposed amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* that would end rent control and implement no cause-evictions."

This person writes: "We're seeing real challenges with affordability in our territory right now and connecting the maximum rent hike to inflation helps protect renters from arbitrarily or predatory rent hikes. I'm asking that you keep a limit on annual rent increases that reflects the cost of living. In addition, I have not seen convincing data to support the changes that are about to take effect, and humbly ask that it be provided. Yukoners need to be able to access the data that is informing this policy change. Our territory needs a healthy, dependable, and fair rental market. Unfortunately, Bill 8 in its current form fails to move us in that direction and risks adding more strain to an already troubled rental environment. My hope is that you and your government will move away from Bill 8 and put forward solutions that better addresses the concerns of renters."

This person writes: "This move to bring back no-cause evictions undermines that and will undoubtedly disproportionately impact Indigenous folks and people of colour."

This person writes: "For all of my life I have lived in and on rental properties. For the past 8 years I rented in the Yukon and the weak tenant act made it so housing was a very stressful part of my life. I recently purchased a home but tenants deserve better protections. They deserve minimum protections which is the practice of most provinces and territories."

Someone else wrote: "Yukon has some of the highest rent in Canada, often being higher than comparable living spaces in the biggest cities in Canada. Removing rent control will undoubtedly cause a large spike in homelessness, crime, and a large amount of strong, intelligent, hard working people will be forced to leave Yukon to other parts of Canada, stripping Yukon of the people that work vital jobs for our territory."

This person writes: "I also wanted to add to this letter that I am a front line service provider. I work at Kaushee's Place and at the wellness centre for CYFN. Between both jobs over the last 2 years I have seen the effects of the housing crisis up close and personal. Many folks who access the wellness centre and Kaushee's are there due to unstable, unaffordable living situations. Ending the rent cap and no cause evictions in the month of December when families and individuals are already struggling with the holidays right around the corner is a decision I hope you strongly reconsider."

This person wrote: "As a paramedic advocating for livable communities, and as a Yukoner who wants to continue being able to live in Whitehorse, I am concerned about housing costs. If a full time First Responder is spending over 30% of their income on rent for a market-rate single bedroom apartment, the market has gone wrong. Further escalation of housing costs will deprive our community of essential workers in the middle of a housing, opioid, and climate crisis.

This person wrote: "I want to add some of my personal experience with this. My wife and I recently moved into a house that we built ourselves, which took a few years and was a very stressful part of our lives. I had been a very responsible tenant for 22 years, with good to great relationships with all except my last landlord. Our previous landlords were nice, professional, understanding and accommodating. Then they sold the house to the biggest…" — I'm going to leave people to read the words in here — "…I have ever had to deal with. We had many issues with him during our 3 years. The rent control measures and no-cause eviction saved us, directly. Without it, we would''ve had to move while building our house. He ended up lying about his son moving in just so he could have staff move in and charge more for rent. We had 60 days to move out, which very fortunately aligned with when we were going to give our 30 day notice. We filed a dispute with the RTO and won every aspect of our case. While no political party is perfect, the Yukon Party really went in the wrong direction here."

This person wrote: "Claiming your reasons for doing this are to increase incentive for people to purchase property here is ridiculous. I don't know of a single liveable house here that is empty and unowned — what other houses need to be bought up? Claiming that this bill will increase the availability of houses for rent would only be true if there were houses sitting empty, which there are not."

This person wrote: "Are you serious? Like life ain't got hard enough for all of us Yukoners? I personally know Elders without stable housing, youth in the streets, single mothers working day and night to not even be able to meet the end of the month. Men who can't afford to live a life out of camp. Couples who can't afford to start a family. Women trying to escape domestic violence without being able to find a place on their own. Bunch of people paying 2k$ a month already to live in dry crooked cabins 40mins out of town with no service, cause there's no other options. Meanwhile all of these people are hard workers and tax payers! On top of that now we'll be at the mercy of the upper class who can evict us without reason at any time? Yukon Government has been serving southern settlers on the back of the local working class and it's got to stop cause the price we pay is our quality of life and our right to dignity."

This person writes: "I am senior on a fixed income currently renting. I'm very nervous about the prospect of rent increases and no cause evictions. My rent is $2000. Per month plus utilities. My income doesn't cover the rent so I pay from savings which could become completely depleted as costs ie. rent & electricity continue to rise. I believe the government should be protecting the people not putting them at risk."

This person writes: "I'm writing to you about your government's proposed changes to the Residential Tenancies Act. Unlike you and a lot of people in your government these changes will have a direct and severely negative impact on me and most of the people I care about here in making an already precarious housing market even more insecure. Ending rent control and implementing no cause evictions is an infuriatingly

out of touch policy in a place where stable affordable housing is already incredibly difficult to find. I'm given to understand that the old act also included specific protections for people who shared a living space with their landlord and your party didn't seem to realize you were removing these protections when asked about it. Specific protections need to be added to the act for those cases because by default tenancies acts will not apply to them. The people who crafted the act knew this because they did their research and were careful about their wording. This change to the act seems like the opposite of a thoughtful reasoned approach and seems instead motivated purely by ideology but I'm willing to be proven wrong if you can show any data that was used to make this decision. What research was done to show that the act as it stands was not effectively serving the people? What problem is this meant to be solving and what evidence do you have that that problem was severe enough to implement changes that will almost certainly lead to people in the Yukon losing their housing?"

This person writes: "I understand that landlords feel like they are not getting the value they think they deserve, and that the policy has the intention to increase rental units available. However, at least in the short term, this policy will increase the pressure on the people who are the most vulnerable, such as seniors, single mothers, and people who are dependent on a sole income. The number of rentals will not increase overnight, and it may also cause a spike in housing prices, effectively pushing people away from both markets. Please consider at least a transition phase, or a more controlled rate increase such as the one seen in BC."

This person writes: "I understand that balancing the needs and priorities of tenants and landlords can be difficult, but consider the Yukon Party's other priorities: safe streets, reducing homelessness, etc. Policy decisions must be driven by locally-informed data and cannot occur in a vacuum."

This person wrote: "As a single income young homeowner, to afford my home in this market, I rent rooms in my shared home to other Yukoners. I have always used my own rental agreements that implement more protections for my renters than the law allows to ensure I am a fair and equitable landlady, and ensure my tenants have rights and are aware of the landlord and tenant act and their rights under it. Often my tenants do not realise that renting in a shared home means less protections as a tenant, and now the Yukon Party is proposing to remove what little protections my housemates used to have. With security deposits, first and last, and the current market cost for room rentals let alone private residence rentals, the cost of entry to housing is a record high for anyone, but especially those with dependents and/or single incomes. I am concerned for my housemates and for my fellow Yukoners, as a landlady, and as someone who was renting rooms myself just a couple years ago. I would be very scared to re-enter the rental market with no rent cap and no cause evictions. With little capacity at the shelter, limited hotel accommodations that are at some times fully booked like during large events such as Native Hockey Tournament or AWG, and no more warming center since the Yukon Party closed it, where will Yukoners go when they are kicked to the curb unexpectedly and then face a very high cost to find another rental? I have a very well paying job and job security as a union member, but I do not think I could afford to find a rental if I were evicted with no notice or if I faced an unexpected rent increase, let alone numerous unexpected rent increases throughout the year as the proposed amendments would allow."

This person writes: "I have been both a landlord and renter during my life growing up and making a life in the Yukon. I have also worked for government in policy, including at the table when an earlier update to the Landlord and Tenant Act was crafted. During that process, which was done by thoughtful people, I looked around the table and realized that almost everyone there was an owner and/or a landlord. The people - including MLAs - who do this work do not have the understanding of what it''s like to be a renter. Nor do they experience what changes like the ones proposed do to people who are struggling for stability. Rental uncertainty, and a system that benefits landlords at the expense of people trying to move out of poverty only exacerbates inequality, not to mention increases demand on social services. We all bear that burden…"

This person writes: "No-cause evictions in particular put renters into a position of extreme precarity. When homeowners are at risk of losing homes to flooding, we call in the military. When renters lose homes through no fault of their own, we seem to shrug our collective shoulders and say, 'That's business.' The human costs of housing instability are enormous. With a tight rental market, displaced tenants are unlikely to find comparable housing within the same neighbourhood, forcing children to change schools and lose friend networks, or putting families into time-consuming transportation routines. The daily stress of instability takes a toll on mental health. I am a homeowner who was fortunate to be in a position to purchase housing to avoid no-cause eviction by former landlords seeking higher 'returns on investment.' My sympathies remain with tenants despite my changed status. Rent control linked to inflation seems reasonable, and we should not go back to no-cause evictions. The imbalance of power between a landlord seeking a higher income and a tenant losing their housing is too great. The Yukon is an outlier in allowing this—please reconsider."

This person wrote: "My landlord informed me that my rent will be increasing in January. This news is especially disheartening given my commitment as a long-term tenant. Over the years, I have continually gone above and beyond to look after this property and assist them—handling pest control out of pocket while they were abroad, shoveling heavy snow in the winter, mowing the lawn in the summer, and caring for their cat. I've even managed their short-term messy tenants, handed off keys for their other properties, and provided airport rides for them and their family. Despite tolerating years of broken and moldy appliances that damaged my clothing, and managing everything while they were out of the country, I am still facing a rent hike. Without rent protections in place, dedicated tenants like me who actively care for their homes and landlords are left facing financial hardship despite doing everything right."

This person writes: "I am writing to you as a deeply concerned and terrified 19-year-old Yukoner who has lived independently since I was 17. I currently live in a dry cabin with no running water, paying a lot of money for a place with minimal conditions while trying to find a stable place in town. It is already exceptionally hard to secure housing, and young people frequently face discrimination from landlords who are hesitant to rent to us. Rent prices are already insane—even a

basic one-bedroom is almost impossible to afford when a one-bedroom apartment with utilities should max out at $1,500 a month. Knowing that proposed amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act—which end rent control and implement no-cause evictions—are set to take effect on December 1st of this year, just as Yukoners head into winter and the holidays, is terrifying. I'm so scared to end up homeless and freeze on the street like it's actually that serious — housing is a basic human right. It makes me wonder what you guys are thinking. Do you plan on building apartments that are actually less than $1,500 a month with utilities? Instead of removing tenant protections, the Yukon Government needs to immediately force down high rent costs and focus heavily on building non-profit and low-income housing fast, at scale, with proper placements and drastically shorter waitlists so people can actually afford a decent home."

This person wrote about an experience of having the RTA and the sheriff knocking on their door because of a no-cause eviction while they were still allowed. They say, "I am still devastated that had happened. This will ruin many many families…"

This person says: "Seriously, I am scared as I am on a fixed income and there 5 to 6 yrs wait to get lower income housing…"

This person writes: "I am writing to you not just as a concerned Yukon renter, but as a mother who is genuinely frightened about what the proposed changes to the Residential Tenancies Act could mean for my family. I am a solo mom raising two little girls, and like any mother, all I want is to be able to give my children a safe, happy and stable home. Somewhere they can grow up feeling secure, without having to worry about the things that adults worry about. I work hard to provide that for them, and the thought that the security of our home could be taken away from us through no fault of our own is absolutely terrifying. I cannot emphasize enough just how frightening these proposed changes are for someone in my position. The possibility of no cause evictions, combined with removing limits on rent increases, leaves families like mine in an incredibly vulnerable position. How am I supposed to feel secure in our home knowing that, even if I do everything right, pay my rent on time and take good care of the property, we could still be forced to leave without having done anything wrong? And where exactly are families like mine supposed to go?

"Finding affordable rental housing in the Yukon is already incredibly difficult. As a solo parent, I don't have the luxury of simply absorbing a substantial rent increase or easily finding another suitable home for my children. The thought of being put in that position, with two little girls depending entirely on me to figure everything out, is overwhelming. I want you to understand that this is already affecting my mental health. These changes haven't even come into effect, yet the uncertainty and fear of what could happen to us are already weighing heavily on me. I find myself worrying about our future and whether I'll be able to continue providing the stability my daughters deserve. It is an awful feeling as a mother, knowing that something so fundamental to your children's well-being could suddenly be beyond your control. My girls deserve to feel settled. They deserve the security of their own home, their routines, their school, their friendships and everything that makes their little world feel safe. Children should not have to experience the upheaval of losing their home simply because a landlord decides to end a tenancy without cause or raise the rent beyond what their parent can afford.

"I understand that landlords have rights and that the government wants to encourage more rental housing. I am not suggesting that landlords should be treated unfairly. But surely there has to be a balance that doesn't come at the expense of families who are already doing their very best to get by. I also understand that the proposed legislation would require six months notice for no cause evictions and rent increases. But six months'' notice does not make an unaffordable home affordable, nor does it guarantee that another suitable rental will be available. It simply gives a family six months to live with the knowledge that they may have nowhere to go. With these changes proposed to take effect on December 1, just as we enter another Yukon winter and the Christmas season, I find the timing especially upsetting.

"I am asking you, sincerely, to please reconsider Bill 8. Please maintain reasonable limits on annual rent increases that reflect the cost of living, and please do not introduce no cause evictions. I would also like to know what evidence the government has that removing these protections will actually improve housing affordability and availability, and how the concerns of renters have been taken into consideration. Housing is not simply an investment or a business decision. For families like mine, it is the foundation of our entire lives. I wish I could properly convey how frightening it is to feel that the security of your children''s home is being placed at risk by decisions you have absolutely no control over. I am doing everything I can to raise my daughters in a loving, stable environment. I should not have to live with the constant fear that, despite doing everything right, we could still lose our home.

"Please think about the parents lying awake worrying about how they would ever find another affordable place to live. Please think about the children whose lives could be turned upside down. And please remember that behind every tenancy agreement is a real person, and often a whole family, whose lives will be directly affected by these decisions. I am not asking for special treatment. I am simply asking for the opportunity to raise my two little girls in a secure home without living in fear of losing it. I sincerely hope you will reconsider these changes and recognize just how much is at stake for Yukon families like mine. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I would genuinely appreciate a response."

This person wrote: "Before rent control my rent in 3 years went up $600 per month. After rent control it has been increased yearly but at a sustainable rate. If rent control is removed then my rent will go through the roof. I am retired with a fixed income. Also, removing the no cause eviction will cause the anxiety of losing home stability."

This person writes: "Our family is 6th generation but it will stop at that because my daughter, husband and 2 kids had no choice but to leave the territory because they couldn't make ends meet paying $3000 a month rent. Her husband worked constantly."

This person said, "My friend has already heard that her rent will be increased by $1600 once this goes into effect. That isn't a landlord covering their expenses. That is cruel, and exploitative, and unsustainable. Who can live here if other landlords choose to do this? We are struggling to find places to live as it is. Those laws were put in place for a reason."

That's the end of the letters that I'm quoting today. Like I said, there were many more, and I selected pieces of them that were unique from each other. I really want to thank the hundreds of Yukoners — the hundreds — like, hundreds of Yukoners — that is such a huge number of people, and you can hear from the words that I've quoted — I've been talking for almost an hour — that people spent hours of their time writing these letters. This is a piece of the consultation that should have happened before these amendments came, and these voices — these words — deserve to be fully considered by this House, by this Cabinet, by this minister, by this government.

I'm asking that we pause, that we step backwards and take the time so that the university student who desperately wants to move home but is afraid she won't be able to, that her voice will be heard, so that the mother wondering how she's going to keep her two girls in a safe and stable home, that her voice is heard, so that the seniors wondering how long their savings will last because their income doesn't cover their rent and won't even more so in the future, so that their voices are heard. That's what I'm asking for. I'm asking us to go back, take a moment, pause, reconsider, and really listen to the voices of Yukoners.

I have for tabling 292 letters. The contents that I just read were all in these letters, and I hope all members of this House will consider these voices.

Hon. Currie Dixon: This is a procedural motion that would have us go backwards in the legislative process.

This is a matter that's already been decided upon by the Legislative Assembly earlier this Sitting. I believe that the Legislative Assembly was well aware of the contents of the bill when we voted on it, and we are not in favour of moving backward.

Kate White: I think the first thing I'll note is I welcome the Premier to the conversation, because that hadn't happened before. I'm interested honestly to hear from other members of the Yukon Party caucus, because we hadn't heard from them. We still haven't heard from them about this. Listening today to those letters, despite the fact that I have read them, hearing some of the parts that I hadn't read yet, should be devastating for anyone who just listened. Absolutely devastating.

We highlighted during Committee of the Whole or in line-by-line that there could have been surgical amendments as opposed to the sledgehammer approach. We believe that still is the case.

This is an opportunity for those members who haven't spoken to speak. This is an opportunity. We showed it today. An elected person should be able to vote for what matters to their community. They should be able to vote differently than the party, if that's the case.

This is an opportunity to go back, and again, it's at least 2,370-something households, because in all the conversations that we had there was no knowledge or no understanding, for example, of how many tenants there are in the territory. This is an opportunity to go backwards. This is an opportunity for the government to consider what was read today, to read those letters again. I'll note that they have been sent to the minister. The minister has had them. Maybe her colleagues haven't had a chance to see them, so now they have been tabled again.

This is an opportunity to do right by the thousands of Yukon tenants. That's what we're asking. We heard from the Premier. We've heard from the Minister of Community Services, but we haven't heard from anyone else. Maybe this is an opportunity. I welcome them to join the conversation. Because, again, this affects more than 2,000 Yukon households. That's a really big deal.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I just want to thank my colleague for sharing the thoughts and the words of fellow Yukoners that are being greatly impacted by decisions that are made by government. It was hard to hear some of the stories and know what it was like even thinking back to when I was raising my young kids and struggling to buy groceries and pay rent and get to and from a job and maybe not have family close by to help. It just brought back a lot of those memories and how important it is for us to think on our decision-making.

At Third Reading, I asked the government to watch closely what happens after December 1, and I asked them to be willing to come back to this Legislature if the results are not what they expect. This motion gives the government a chance to do that before the changes take effect, not after.

I appreciate the important questions my colleagues on this side of the House have asked through debate and, through those, the realization that there are in fact unintended consequences of this legislation. I think it's a show of maturity and strength to admit when a mistake is made and to be willing to adjust as needed. Sending the bill back to Committee of the Whole would let members hear information as it is gathered and consider amendments. I really think that this is a reasonable request, and I will be supporting it.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Lane Tredger: I read all those letters for the first time over the last week or so, and then I read them again today, and every time, they hit again. Hearing the stories of people who are so afraid, so afraid for themselves, for their neighbours, for their children. I think of that mum who wrote in about her two little girls, and I can't imagine, as a single parent of two little girls, that she has a lot of extra time in her day. But she took a lot of time to write.

Hundreds of Yukoners took so much time, so much of their precious time out of their day to write. That deserves our attention; that deserves our consideration. I want to thank every one of them for participating in democracy in that way, for making their voices heard, for standing up for themselves and for their neighbours.

I ask us all to give that participation, to give that time, to give that effort, to give those voices what they deserve and vote that this motion pass and we go back so we can really consider their input as is our job as representatives of Yukoners and members of this House.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Disagree.
Hon. Scott Kent: Disagree.
Hon. Cory Bellmore: Disagree.
Hon. Brad Cathers: Disagree.
Hon. Ted Laking: Disagree.
Patti McLeod: Disagree.
Hon. Laura Lang: Disagree.
Hon. Jen Gehmair: Disagree.
Hon. Wade Istchenko: Disagree.
Adam Gerle: Disagree.
Doris Anderson: Disagree.
Tyler Porter: Disagree.
Kate White: Agree.
Lane Tredger: Agree.
Brent McDonald: Agree.
Linda Moen: Agree.
Carmen Gustafson: Agree.
Justin Ziegler: Accord.
Debra-Leigh Reti: Agreed.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are seven yea, 12 nay.

Speaker: The nays have it.
I declare the motion defeated.
Motion No. 195 negatived

Motion No. 191 — Radio broadcasting of sitting days

Clerk: Motion No. 191, standing in the name of Debra-Leigh Reti.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT the Members' Services Board examine options for enabling 93.5 FM to be received in the community of Old Crow; and

THAT the board report to the Legislative Assembly on its findings and recommendations by April 1, 2027.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise to speak to Motion No. 191 in which I am asking that the Members' Services Board look at options for getting 93.5 FM to Old Crow and report back to this House by April 1, 2027. For anyone who doesn't know, 93.5 FM is the radio station that carries the proceedings of this Assembly. When we are sitting, people can turn on the radio and hear what is being said in this room. It is a really good service.

The problem as I understand it is that it is a low-power signal and it doesn't reach very far outside of Whitehorse. It certainly does not reach Old Crow, and I suspect there are a lot of other communities that can't pick it up either. Even just outside of town, the coverage is pretty poor.

In Old Crow, people still use the radio all the time. In a lot of homes, it is on in the kitchen all day. It's how people hear the news and announcements for Old Crow. When I tell people at home that we were talking about something in the Legislature, a lot of them say they would have listened if they could. They want to hear what is going on here, and they can't.

My community of Old Crow has been involved in politics and world events for many, many years. They have been known for speaking out for our caribou. They have been known for donating to catastrophes around the world. They're very involved. This is very important to them, being so remote in our far North.

I know some people would say that the proceedings are already streamed online, and that is true. But that assumes that people have Internet at home and they can afford it. In Old Crow, Internet is very expensive and it's not always reliable. It also assumes that people are comfortable using it. For a lot of our elders, finding a livestream on a website is not familiar nor easy. But the radio — you turn it on and it works.

We talk a lot in this House about being accountable to Yukoners. Part of that is people being able to hear what their representatives are saying and doing here. I'm sure everyone in the House would love it if more people heard what they have to say in here every day. We put in a lot of time and work to make these discussions happen, so it seems fitting to do what we can to help people listen if they want to.

I don't know the right technical answer. That's why the motion asks the Members' Services Board to look at the options. Maybe it's a small transmitter in the community. Maybe it's working with a station that already reaches Old Crow to carry the proceedings when we sit. Maybe there are other ways I haven't thought of. The board is in a good position to find out what is possible and what it would cost and to tell us. If there's a way to do this for Old Crow, it may help other communities too.

The motion also asks for a report by April 1, 2027, and I think that's pretty reasonable. It gives the board time to do the work, and it means that we will hear back on it.

This seems to me like a pretty simple thing. People in Old Crow want to listen to the House on the radio like other Yukoners can, and they should be able to. I hope today all members will support this motion.

Hon. Brad Cathers: We will support this motion. Those of us from the government caucus are open to considering it, as the member touched on in her remarks.

One of the questions that obviously does spring to mind when this is presented is the feasibility of people listening online. I also heard the member's points about people using the radio. So, it would be, I think, a good opportunity for MSB to talk about it in a more relaxed fashion than here in the Assembly to understand whether, for the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin's constituents, it's not feasible to listen online or whether it's a lack of being aware that's an option. Also, the question of what would be the costs of setting up a transmitter or, as she suggested, whether an existing radio service could carry it. I would just note that understanding what's being requested or proposed and what the cost implications would be — it would certainly be a question, but we're open to exploring it and to considering it. If indeed this is something that seems feasible and necessary to provide more opportunity for the member's constituents to be able to hear debates in this Assembly, we're certainly open to that concept.

I could stand to be corrected on this by Legislative Assembly staff, but to the best of my understanding, I think that the 93.5 transmitter just operates in Whitehorse and provides very limited coverage in the surrounding area. The costs of providing it in other communities have certainly, I think, been discussed at some

point in the pas, but to my recollection, not recently. Technology and the costs of technologies have changed.

Long story short, the government caucus will be voting in favour of the motion and happy to have that more detailed consideration of this at Members' Services Board.

Brent McDonald: Thank you to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this important issue forward. This is an issue that is very important to me and to many rural Yukoners. I support this motion ensuring that all Yukoners, regardless of where they live, have the opportunity to listen to and engage with the proceedings of this Assembly.

Many of us take that privilege for granted, but access to these proceedings is not equitable across the territory. It's important that people in every Yukon community have the chance to hear debates that take place, learn about the issues being discussed, and understand how decisions are being made that impact them. This is how we strengthen democracy. People can form their own opinions, stay informed, and have conversations about issues that affect their communities.

Having access to the Legislative Assembly broadcast creates opportunities for youth to learn about government and democratic processes. It helps residents know what decisions their government is making and encourages conversations that happen around kitchen tables across the Yukon. These conversations are an important part of civic engagement. Rural Yukoners being able to hear what their MLA is saying, how they are being represented, and what decisions are being made on the issues that affect their community is extremely important. Access to the Legislative Assembly broadcast strengthens transparency, accountability, and democratic participation.

Not all Yukoners have reliable access to Internet, and radio broadcast is very important to ensure access is equitable. I appreciate the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin bringing this motion forward on behalf of her community. I know there are many rural Yukoners outside of Old Crow who also experience similar concerns.

Therefore, I would like to table a friendly amendment in order to ensure this motion supports all Yukoners.

Amendment proposed

Brent McDonald: I move:

THAT Motion No. 191 be amended by removing the phrase "the community of Old Crow" and replacing it with the phrase "all Yukon communities".

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Klondike:

THAT Motion No. 191 be amended by removing the phrase "the community of Old Crow" and replacing it with the phrase "all Yukon communities".

Brent McDonald: I'm grateful to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing forward this important motion. While this motion highlights the importance of access for Old Crow, I know that residents in other rural Yukon communities face similar barriers. I support this motion and I raise this amendment in solidarity with all of Yukon, especially Old Crow.

Access to Legislative Assembly broadcasts is important for strengthening democracy, education, transparency, and inclusion. Expanding this motion to include all Yukon communities recognizes that this is not an issue affecting just one community and ensures no one is left behind. This is an important issue that affects Yukoners across the territory. Broadening the motion strengthens democratic participation across the Yukon. Whether access is provided through AM radio, FM radio, or another approach, the goal should be the same: ensuring all Yukoners have a reliable way to listen to the proceedings of this House. This is in the best interest of all Yukoners.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for this. I do understand that, however we're going to look at this, there's going to be a cost — however we proceed further with it and do our research, but just thank you for everyone's support on this.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Are you agreed?

Amendment to Motion No. 191 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any debate on the motion as amended?

If the member now speaks, the member will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Debra-Leigh Reti: Again, I just greatly appreciate everyone supporting this and hopefully in the future with technology, that we could be able to share our hard work with the rest of the Yukon and that they'll be able to participate a whole lot more.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Are you agreed?

Motion No. 191, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 193 — Housing subsidies

Clerk: Motion No. 193, standing in the name of Kate White.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

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.

Kate White: This probably isn't a surprise that this is a topic of conversation that I'd like to tackle today, and so I hope that it can be positive. I really do. I hope it can be positive.

I'll start off by saying that I appreciate the leadership shown by the minister of Yukon Housing in the expansion of the Canada-Yukon housing rental benefit, and by the expansion, I mean the increase of that funding, recognizing that there was a 32-percent increase on average in the cost of rental housing since 2020 when this program was initially made available. I'll start there. I think that's incredible, and I think we should build on that.

One of the concerns that I have, though, is that the Canada-Yukon housing rental benefit is not available to all, and that matters, and it matters for a lot of different reasons, because as we've discussed in this Assembly at length, social assistance rates really haven't kept up, and so I've asked in other ways — I've asked if there could be an interim top-up on social assistance rates.

I'll note that it's highest for a one-bedroom unit in Whitehorse. It's $711 a month for the rental cost itself, and then it's got utilities on top. You'd think I'd have it up at this point in time — I've said it so many times — but let me just get this up.

At its top, social assistance rates for housing for a one-bedroom in Whitehorse are $711 a month and the utilities. Although I do appreciate that utilities go in sections, so there are three different costs. There's the June to September, which is $477 a month; October, April, and May, which is $557 a month; and November to March, which is the highest at $635 a month.

For those who are already talking about it, the math — it is not a lot of money, and I say that because it's truly not a lot of money. There's been lots of conversation, and sometimes I wonder if folks believe that every person on social assistance is living in Yukon Housing, in housing that's rent geared to income, because sometimes when we have conversations about this, it makes it seem that is the belief. For the months of November to March, a one-bedroom apartment in Whitehorse, the maximum money a person on social assistance can get is $1,346, so that is rent and utilities included. So, one of the reasons why I wanted to bring this up today — and every day, really, as it seems lately — is because there are folks who are struggling and will continue to struggle.

The Canada-Yukon housing benefit has really specific requirements, and it should have requirements. I don't think that's a negative thing at all, but the challenge with that is that with those requirements or with those stipulations, we're leaving people out — folks on social assistance, folks who are on long-term disability. That social assistance plus the $250 Yukon supplementary allowance — that is the additional funding that a person with long-term disability gets.

When you go online to the Yukon Housing website and you look at the requirements to be able to apply for a rent subsidy, it says — and I'll just read it off. "People who have a low- to moderate-income can apply to get help with their rent from the Canada-Yukon Housing Rental Benefit program.

"When we receive applications, we: process and review them to see if they're eligible; and send a letter to everyone who applies with details about their application or eligibility. If the program becomes fully subscribed we: continue to process applications; and put eligible applicants on a wait-list. We contact eligible applicants when there's a space in the program."

There we go. That's if you've applied. And it says: "To be eligible for the Canada-Yukon Housing Rental Benefit you must: be a Canadian citizen or have permanent resident or refugee status; be a Yukon resident for at least 3 months; be renting a house in the Yukon and not receiving any other housing benefit or subsidy; have an annual household income (combined income of all adults 19 or older who live in the home) under the Affordable Household Income Limits for your eligible unit size (based on the National Occupancy Standards); have less than $100,000 in included assets; file an annual Canadian Income Tax Return; and have income from a qualifying source such as: employment; Employment Insurance; short-term Workers Compensation; short-term disability; alimony payments; Training Allowance; Old Age Security; Guaranteed Income Supplement; or pension income."

The reason why I'm highlighting that is that a person on social assistance or long-term disability does not qualify for that. The reason why I am bringing it up and I want to include mobile home owners is because mobile home owners aren't included in this either, because they own the home, but they rent the land. That's a problem. The Canada-Yukon housing rental benefit is Yukon Housing's rent subsidy.

That is the program that exists, but it's not the only program, because there is also a program for folks who are fleeing gender-based violence, and they can apply for housing support through the gender-based violence program. This one has a bit more flexibility. However, you need to be a survivor of gender-based violence. That will exclude many people, because that has to be one of the things. The program that supports folks in the gender-based violence program does allow people to pay, for example, for mortgages. They can pay their mortgages and it allows other things, but it doesn't, of course, open it up to all the tenants that need support in the territory.

When we look at the available programs and understand that there are restrictions, we could talk about the affordable housing income limits. I've mentioned this before. I didn't necessarily highlight it in this one, but I think this is going to have to be looked at. There are seniors — we heard some today in letters that were being sent, but there are seniors who are in market rent. They are not in seniors housing because they don't meet the requirements. There are seniors who are living at places like Normandy Living, and so they have possibly assets over $100,000, but they are still renters, and they don't qualify for subsidies. I didn't mention them specifically in this, but I think this is something that I hope that the government has in back of mind.

The minister has done a good job in recent times talking about the importance of the Canada-Yukon housing rental benefit and how come there was a decision to increase it; it's true, and we recognize that and we thank him for that. That's an important change.

But today in the motion, what we're talking about is looking at programs that will include folks who are accessing social assistance or long-term disability or who own mobile homes, right? The motion specifically is saying: "… increase housing subsidies for people who do not qualify for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit…" — expand or increase subsidies — because currently, those folks aren't covered under any program by Yukon Government.

I could spend a lot of time going through the number of folks on social assistance, but I want to get away from that. In my closing, I could talk about the pad fees for mobile home parks in Whitehorse. The lowest is Baranov at $500 a month, and the highest is Benchmark at $750 a month. I'll note that folks who own those homes often are paying mortgages and paying the rent at the same time, right? So, it's a double thing. Really, today I was hoping that we could have a conversation about how government can support Yukon renters who don't currently qualify for their programs and what that could look like. I'm optimistic. I'm hopeful. Again, because of the leadership that we saw by the minister of Yukon Housing with the expansion of the amounts in the Canada-Yukon rental housing benefit and how that was increased because the minister recognized that housing costs have increased by 32 percent since 2020 — I note that social assistance rates have not kept up, but people on social assistance can't access these programs. I'm looking for programs that can support Yukon

renters who do not currently qualify for the only rental subsidy program that Yukon Government offers.

I look forward to the conversation, hopefully a positive outcome — optimism. Madam Speaker, optimism. The minister of Yukon Housing Corporation maybe didn't look at me in an optimistic way, but I remain hopeful.

This is an opportunity. We've had lots of conversation right now about Bill No. 8 and the more than 2,300 Yukon renters. I'll note that's more than the number of folks who access social assistance. I'll note that there is going to be a need, and I'm trying to get ahead of it. I hope that the response will be positive, and I look forward to hearing from the minister.

Hon. Scott Kent: I appreciate the motion brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition today. It's my honour to respond to the motion on behalf of the Government caucus, and I just wanted to start by providing a little bit of context around the Canada-Yukon housing benefit, or CYHB.

The program provides enhanced support for low- to moderate-income rental households facing affordability pressures, particularly families with higher rental costs. The program also helps individuals experiencing gender-based violence access and maintain safe housing in the private rental market. The benefit is a direct-to-tenant portable rental subsidy, helping recipients bridge the gap between their income and market rent costs. The program is co-developed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, and Yukon Housing Corporation through bilateral housing agreements.

Program eligibility follows specific criteria to ensure that available funds help support those who need it most. This includes renters in the private rental market who may not have equity or assets to protect against private rental market fluctuations and are therefore experiencing core housing need.

Yukon Housing updates benefit amounts and income eligibility on an annual basis using a sliding-scale benefit calculation and the size of the unit. As referenced, that change was made earlier this year, and I know I've said it in the House before during Question Period, but previously, the program set a fixed benefit amount of $200, $400, $600, or $800 depending on a client's income. But changes to the rent subsidy stream implemented in June of this year adjusted the maximum benefit by household size, so larger households who face higher costs may receive a higher benefit, and it introduced a sliding scale so that changes in income lead to proportionate changes in benefits. As I mentioned, previously, it was from $200 to $800, the fixed benefit amount. Now the maximum benefit for a bachelor suite starts at $885, and it increases up to a four-bedroom home at $1,403.

We also made changes to the gender-based violence stream that were implemented in May of this year, and that includes increasing the maximum benefit for pre-housing support to $8,160 and increasing the rent subsidy to a maximum of $2,190 per month, responding to the increase in rental rates that I've talked about and the member opposite talked about — that 32-percent increase from 2020 to the current time. Pre-housing support is provided through client-servicing NGOs to cover costs related to moving, housing set-up, security deposits, and the first two months of rent. That was that $8,160 amount that I spoke about.

Again, as I mentioned, benefit amounts are determined by using federally established CMHC calculation frameworks and Yukon Bureau of Statistics data on median household income. The affordable housing income limits are based on the 2023 Yukon median family income plus an additional 20 percent to account for utility costs. Other eligibility criteria such as qualifying income sources were determined using criteria established by the CMHC in the Canada-Yukon bilateral housing agreement. This agreement prioritizes households in housing need, including vulnerable households, households in existing community housing, or households in severe housing need. Therefore, the Canada-Yukon housing benefit program is designed to help those most vulnerable in the private rental market who may not have equity or assets to protect against private rental market fluctuations and are therefore experiencing core housing need. By helping renters remain in the private rental market, the benefit also helps reduce pressure on Yukon Housing's rent-geared-to-income wait-list. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit helps ensure that available federal housing funding is directed to renters facing affordability pressures.

Any changes that we consider or want to make to the CYHB program must follow necessary engagement with federal partners per the existing bilateral agreement. This also includes Yukon Government practices, including collaboration with the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors as well as Management Board.

The CYHB was introduced in 2020 through the Canada-Yukon Bilateral Agreement, signed under the national housing strategy, and provides portable relief, as mentioned, to private market renters. CYHB was co-developed under that bilateral agreement with CMHC and involves a cost-matching model where federal funds are allocated and matched territorially to ensure that solutions respond to local housing pressures. This partnership has evolved to meet emerging needs. The CYHB program expanded to include targeted streams such as the gender-based violence housing benefit stream to allow for funding to provide emergency rental support to individuals fleeing violence. To date, the program has supported over 300 households to secure and maintain housing in the private rental market. The shared Canada-Yukon commitment under bilateral agreements ensures predictable cost-matched funding required to deliver programs such as the CYHB.

We are, of course, looking forward to the tabling of the federal budget tomorrow, where we expect to learn more about Canada's plans for the next iteration of the national housing strategy, which expires in March 2028. This has been the topic of much discussion at the provincial-territorial housing ministers table, and we look forward to, as I mentioned, learning more tomorrow once the federal government tables their budget, and we're hoping for a positive response so that we can prepare for, as I mentioned, the next iteration after they expire in March of 2028. The Yukon Government continues to collaborate with Canada and strengthen federal partnerships to ensure that programs like the CYHB can continue to support renters in a way that responds to market realities.

I just want to go back to something I mentioned earlier and just reiterate that any changes to the program must follow necessary engagement with federal partners per the existing bilateral agreement. This also includes Yukon Government practices, including collaboration with the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors and Management Board.

Given that we would require that engagement, I would like to make an amendment to the motion.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Scott Kent: I move:

THAT Motion No. 193 be amended by replacing the phrase "to expand and increase" with the phrase "to consider expanding and increasing".

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT Motion No. 193 be amended by replacing the phrase "to expand and increase" with the phrase "to consider expanding and increasing".

Hon. Scott Kent: I noted the guffaws from across the aisle when I read in the amendments — and perhaps disappointment — but I think that this is an important amendment. The motion as amended would read: "THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consider expanding and increasing 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."

I think it's apparent that there is a willingness to make changes to this program, as we did earlier this year, mentioning the increase in the amount of the subsidy and the increase to the gender-based violence subsidy. That said, I also mentioned that we do have partners in this. We do have to work with the Government of Canada. We have to work with the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors, and we have to work within Management Board as well.

I think, as the original motion read, it was very definitive that we would expand and increase the housing subsidies. But I cannot commit to that without engaging with our partners in this funding. As I mentioned, it is a cost-shared program with the Government of Canada.

Like housing ministers across the country, we're looking for some good news on the national housing strategy tomorrow. This is an important fund for the Yukon, but it's also important for every other province and territory in the country when it comes to supporting renters in the private rental markets and keeping rent-geared-to-income and social housing opportunities available.

While there may be some disappointment from the Leader of the Official Opposition, by changing it to "… consider expanding and increasing housing subsidies…", as I mentioned, there is a willingness for us to adjust that as evidenced by the changes we made earlier this year, and this is something that I take seriously. I take motions that come to the floor of the House extremely seriously and look to implement them where possible.

But in this case, I'll have to work with partners, including the Government of Canada and Housing Corporation and Management Board, before making any announcements. But by putting in the word "consider", I would certainly expect to do that work and report back to the House if we can expand the program or make the changes that will include those in the motion.

Kate White: I'll note that the motion actually says that the Government of Yukon expand and increase housing subsidies for people who do not qualify for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. The motion was about different programs, make programs, expand programs, find programs, and create subsidies. But that being said, I'm not going to win the argument, and if "consider expanding and increasing … the Canada-Yukon housing benefit" is what I'm going to get, it's on its way, I guess.

The reality is that I will ask about this for the rest of time. I'm giving the minister plenty of heads-up that I'll be looking for follow-up and I'll be looking for information and, more than that, I'll be looking for programs that support people who do not currently qualify, which is why the motion was about creating subsidies for those people.

I don't know that it's friendly. I'll accept it. At least there's an acknowledgement that people don't qualify currently. I'd like them to qualify. That's why I wanted different programs. But if this is the way it's going to go, my optimism is a little bit tarnished. But I remain hopeful, and I will send every person who reaches out to me that does not currently qualify to the minister of Yukon Housing directly.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Are you agreed?

Amendment to Motion No. 193 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any debate on the motion as amended?

Kate White: I'm going to totally take the last word on this. Now I expect accountability and I expect action. If the minister is going to consider expanding and increasing to include the folks that I've listed, then I would like to know when that happens. The federal budget is tabled tomorrow. I'll be following up. There needs to be action behind this.

In six months, come May of 2027, people will be receiving those rent increases or they'll be receiving notification of the rent increases come December 1. By May of 2027, more people are going to need support, and I have full expectation that this minister will bring something forward that supports the folks who are excluded currently, and I will be following up.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Are you agreed?

Motion No. 193, as amended, agreed to

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. 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: Order. 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*.

Member for Takhini, you have the floor.

Kate White: I'll just take my seat right away so the minister can reintroduce her officials and then I'll get back at it.

Hon. Laura Lang: I'm sorry; I couldn't actually hear what the member opposite said as my colleagues were coming in. I, of course, welcome my two very dear colleagues, Drew MacNeil, Director of Policy and Communications for the Department of Justice, and Deputy Minister and Deputy Attorney General for the department, Mark Radke.

Kate White: I apologize. I spoke fast and with my head down and my fingers on the computer screen, but I just wanted to give the minister a chance to welcome her officials, because they're back again.

When we left off on Monday, I was asking about gifts, and the minister told me that in reference to section 3, that wasn't something that was being contemplated. But I'm going to keep talking about it. The reason why I bring it up is, as an example, yesterday in the Assembly and Committee of the Whole, there was a question, for example, if an MLA was sent on government business to a mining conference in Florida or if the mining company had covered the cost. When I'm asking about this, it's trying to get a sense of the full spectrum of what is even being considered. I asked if the firearms advocate could be sponsored, for example, to attend a conference or to attend an event or a gun show. We've had a bit of time since I asked those questions initially. I believe she said that she was considering or was thinking she was going to contemplate and consider the question as I asked. I just wanted to know if there have been any thoughts to it since Monday to the issue around, for example, gifts or sponsorship.

Hon. Laura Lang: Thank you to the member opposite for this question. This was never something, as I've already said, that was contemplated for this bill or for the purpose of why this bill has been brought together. In fact, the purpose of the bill is to represent Yukoners at national tables. When I think of that, I think of Canada; I don't think of something outside of Canada. As a result of this being brought to my attention, which I do appreciate, upon the provision of finding a suitable candidate for the advocate role, of course, it will be made clear that this job is to hear Yukoners and to advocate at the national level.

Kate White: I appreciate the clarification from the minister. One of the things that the minister has said repeatedly is that this is an arm's-length position. That's why it's not an existing public servant. It is outside of that.

Who will they report to, for example, if they get an invitation or how will the minister ensure that the Yukon firearms advocate isn't accepting paid trips to events outside of Canada? I appreciate that she just said Canada, but in following that up, then does it mean that sponsorship or gifts or paid trips to attend events in Canada are acceptable?

Hon. Laura Lang: I don't suspect that the simple answer of: The advocate reports to me and therefore I will have great awareness of what is going on, is sufficient. Instead, I also offer that in addition to the duties and responsibilities outlined in section 3 of the bill — which will be then further honed into very targeted responsibilities for the individual — section 8(3) specifically says, "In addition to the annual report and financial statement required under subsection (1), the Advocate must, upon request of the Minister, prepare any report, financial statement, budget or other record related to the functions and powers of the Advocate." That also allows me to require the advocate to report anything that includes the potential of gifts or proposed paid travel to events, and then that would make it my decision whether or not that individual can proceed or not.

Kate White: In reading section 8(3), in addition to the annual report and financial statement required under subsection 1, the advocate must, upon request of the minister, prepare any report, financial statement, budget, or other record related to the functions and powers of the advocate. Understanding that is based on request, I'm still trying to get my head around it. Again, there are lots of activities that happen in Canada. It could be a gun show in Calgary, Alberta; it could be something happening in Ontario.

Ultimately, to be able to accept or not accept, who does the advocate report to, or is it going to be like quarterly requests from the minister, or will the advocate have to make a request before accepting, for example, a trip to attend an event? I'm just trying to get a sense of how 8(3) captures what I was asking.

Hon. Laura Lang: I think, to the member opposite's concerns, what I can consider is that — upon the hiring of the advocate and providing the terms of their responsibilities to the individual, I may also consider specifying that any prospective travel outside of the Yukon for various events — whether that is through what I have asked the individual to do or perhaps invitations that have occurred which I may not be aware of — will be reported to me prior to that event happening.

Of course, this is something I am willing to consider, and I suspect that, as this position evolves, other matters will also be raised that I will have to consider that I'm not currently considering. So, I thank the member opposite for that question.

Kate White: I appreciate that response from the minister. How will it be communicated to Yukoners, for example, what the Yukon firearms advocate is allowed to accept or not accept in terms of sponsorships or invitations to attend events outside of the Yukon? I believe the language was considered upon hiring, reported prior to travel, but how will those things be communicated to Yukoners? One of the questions people have is: What will this position do? What does it do?

If this is going to be something that falls under those responsibilities or will be an expectation of that role, how will the minister communicate to Yukoners that is also included in the role, that it's not just carte blanche to go to any event in the country invited by anyone who's willing to pay the cost?

Hon. Laura Lang: What I know for sure is that through the annual reports, the advocate will be reporting on what their activities are throughout the year, and I'm certain that if

questions come up in this House for an update on what the advocate is doing, I will be prepared to speak to that as well.

Kate White: As this position is created going forward, does the minister have any intention of communicating the roles and responsibilities of this position to Yukoners, or is this one of those things that questions will have to be asked in order to have a better understanding of what that role does?

Hon. Laura Lang: I believe Yukoners have been communicated with through section 3 of the bill, and there's no other position that I'm aware of that we then go to greater lengths to communicate with Yukoners on the details of what the individual's responsibilities are. If Yukoners have questions about what the duties are of the individual that is beyond section 3 of this, I'm sure I will hear about that.

Kate White: The minister has talked about the uniqueness of this position, the difference that it's not been done in other places. I believe there's a firearms newspaper that talked about how this is the only position of its kind in the world, and so I think asking the questions about what the role does and the expectations of how it'll be communicated is totally fair.

This is not the Child and Youth Advocate. This is not an advocate within Education. This is not an advocate who works within a department of Yukon Government. This is being created as a stand-alone position. We haven't seen it before. It has lots of things that haven't been seen before. I think it's a fair question to ask about that.

We've talked about travel, and so I wanted to ask about gifts again. I'll note that there are a number of Canadian gun manufacturers in the country — whether we're talking about rifles from Antler Arms or we're talking about Maple Ridge Armoury, Colt Canada, and others. What will prevent the Yukon firearms advocate from receiving a physical gift like this?

Hon. Laura Lang: Again, I go back to the actual purpose of what this position is doing, and in this bill, this was never a contemplation that the advocate would be receiving gifts, nor would I suspect that the advocate would receive a gift.

Kate White: I'll just note that section 3(2) says, "In carrying out the Advocate's functions, the Advocate may do any of the following: … (d) any other activity that the Advocate believes is advisable to effectively carry out the functions of the Advocate."

The reason why I'm asking about travel or I'm asking about gifts is that 3(2)(d) leaves it pretty open, and so again, I think it's fair to ask. Gifts — will they have to be declared? Will they be able to be sold without a declaration? If they are sold, will the declaration need to be that they both received and then sold them and the amount? I ask because, having been involved in the bicycle industry for years, even in kitchens in Europe, occasionally we would be given things like a knife set. But that certainly wasn't an advocate role in this way.

I'm looking for a better understanding.

Hon. Laura Lang: Thank you to the member opposite for raising section 3(2)(d), and I respectfully advise that the section must be read within the intent of the actual bill, not in isolation from the context for which the bill is created. I further remind us that the function of the advocate is outlined also in section 3, and then I would also note that upon the hiring of the advocate, I as the minister am able to constrain and focus the advocate's functions based on what the priorities are that we see as important.

Based on that and seeing the time, Madam Chair, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Currie Dixon: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier 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. Currie Dixon: Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier 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 5:28 p.m.