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Speaker: The Honourable Simeon Mikkungwak, M.L.A.

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

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Immigration; Minister responsible for the
Status of Women*

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**Iqaluit, Nunavut
Friday, February 21, 2020**

Members Present:

Hon. David Akeagok, Mr. Tony Akoak, Ms. Pat Angnakak, Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak, Hon. George Hickes, Hon. David Joanasie, Mr. Joeline Kaerner, Ms. Mila Kamingoak, Mr. Pauloosie Keyootak, Hon. Lorne Kusugak, Mr. Adam Lightstone, Mr. John Main, Hon. Simeon Mikkungwak, Ms. Margaret Nakashuk, Hon. Patterk Netser, Mr. David Qamaniq, Mr. Emiliano Qirngnuq, Mr. Paul Quassa, Mr. Allan Rumbolt, Hon. Joe Savikataaq, Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik, Ms. Cathy Towtongie.

>>House commenced at 10:00

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Simeon Mikkungwak) (interpretation): Good morning. Before we proceed, I ask Member Keyootak to say the opening prayer, please.

>>Prayer

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you very much. To the people of Baker Lake and all Nunavummiut who are following the proceedings, welcome, as well as to those who are listening to the radio broadcast in Nunavut, as the members proceed with their session.

Continuing on with the orders of the day. Ministers' Statements. Minister of Environment, Minister Savikataaq.

Item 2: Ministers' Statements

**Minister's Statement 361 – 5(2):
Nunavut Parks Award**

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say "good morning" to the people of Arviat and have a good weekend.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak about the education initiative that the Nunavut Parks and Special Places Division carries out under a provision of the Umbrella Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement for Territorial Parks in the Nunavut Settlement Area.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment works with the community joint planning and management committees and school officials to deliver an annual award for secondary school students who are top achievers in a parks-related field of study like science and geography.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize the 2019 recipients of Nunavut Parks Awards:

- Laura Attagutsiak – Iqaluit
- David Watsko Jr. – Grise Fiord
- Miazie Joanasie – Cape Dorset
- Sophia Idlout – Resolute Bay
- Nathan Padluq – Kimmirut
- Clayton Nahook Niptanatiak – Kugluktuk
- Lucy Rachel Novalinga – Sanikiluaq
- Wendy Manilak – Rankin Inlet

Mr. Speaker, it is important to encourage young Nunavummiut to pursue fields of study that will lead to a meaningful career path. Nunavut's Territorial Parks and Special Places Division draws many youths for summer employment every year. The skills they develop in the spirit of Pilimmaksarniq help to prepare them for future careers in parks and across government.

Congratulations to the 2019 recipients and good luck to those students hoping for an award in 2020. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Minister Akeeagok.

**Minister's Statement 362 – 5(2):
Potential Heavy Fuel Oil Ban**

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The International Marine Organization's Subcommittee on Pollution Prevention and Response is meeting this week, and the anticipated arctic heavy fuel ban is on the agenda.

While the environmental rationale for this ban is strong and clear, there are real implications for Nunavut's marine transportation sector, which is our only affordable heavy lift mode of transportation.

If it is not managed properly, the heavy fuel oil ban will have a negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of all Nunavummiut. The cost of food, housing, and infrastructure can be expected to increase, and the economic viability of important development projects and activities will erode.

The Government of Nunavut has communicated to our federal counterparts that we are supportive of this change but that effective, economic mitigation measures must be put in place so that Nunavummiut do not bear the costs.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Hon. David Akeeagok: I personally communicated this to my federal counterpart, the Hon. Marc Garneau, last week at the meeting of the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety.

I am very encouraged that Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the Inuit Circumpolar Council of Canada have also taken a similar and balanced position on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Government of Canada to take the time needed to carefully design measures to ensure that Nunavut communities and the emerging economic opportunities that are critical to their prosperity are not negatively impacted by this ban on heavy fuel oil in the Arctic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Ministers' Statements. Minister of Justice, Minister Ehaloak.

**Minister's Statement 363 – 5(2):
Nunavut Law Program**

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) *Ullaakkut*/good morning to my constituents in Cambridge Bay and all Nunavummiut.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide exciting news regarding the Nunavut Law program.

In the fall the Department of Justice was happy to support the Nunavut Law Program in their application for the 2020 Arctic Inspiration Prize. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform you that the

Nunavut Law Program was one of five finalists for this prize and was awarded \$140,000.

>> *Applause*

Mr. Speaker, the law program plans to use the prize to provide the law students with practical learning opportunities, academic support, cultural activities, and financial assistance to ensure their success in this program. A proposed exchange with the University of Lapland in Newfoundland will help students learn about other indigenous legal traditions and to share knowledge and legal insight with other arctic law students.

I look forward to continuing our work with the Nunavut Law Program and to supporting the development and success of future leaders in Nunavut's law field. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister of Education, Minister Joanasié.

**Minister's Statement 364 – 5(2):
Nunavut Student Support
Assistant Handbook**

Hon. David Joanasié (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say "good morning" to all Nunavummiut. Good morning, my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the Department of Education has completed the first made-in-Nunavut Student Support Assistant Handbook. My department is introducing this handbook to approximately 180 student

support assistants during this year's professional development week, taking place from February 17 to 21.

Mr. Speaker, student support assistants work under the guidance of a teacher, helping students achieve their individual goals and become more independent. They also assist with the overall needs and education goals of the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, the Student Support Assistant Handbook clarifies the duties and responsibilities of student assistants, including instructional, social-emotional and personal care support, among others.

Mr. Speaker, this handbook also provides student support assistants with planning and organizational tools and guidance to help them effectively collaborate with students, school staff, and parents.

Mr. Speaker, we hope that this new handbook will help strengthen the important work of student support assistants in helping to engage and support our students so that they are successful. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

**Minister's Statement 365 – 5(2):
Housing Ministers' Meeting**

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say "good morning" to the people of Coral Harbour and Naujaat, as well as the people I play pool with, Bobbie Saviadjuk, Willie Adams, and Tommy Paliak. I miss

playing pool with you.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, earlier this month I met with the Hon. Ahmed Hussen, the federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Minister Hussen is also the Minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, the Hon. Paulie Chinna, also joined us for this meeting.

Mr. Speaker, as can be expected, Minister Chinna and I presented very similar housing priorities to Minister Hussen. Both of our territories are in the grips of a severe housing crisis. We're both desperate for major federal investment to build thousands of critically needed social housing units, and we both need greater support for homeownership programs to get our people into their own homes. I am happy to say that Minister Hussen was very receptive to working with us to find real solutions to the northern housing crisis.

Mr. Speaker, for the last several months, the three territorial housing corporations have begun to identify ways we can build a strong northern housing alliance. For example, later this month I will be hosting a teleconference, or plan to, with Minister Chinna and the Hon. Pauline Frost, Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation. The goal of the meeting is to discuss how we can work together to better lobby the federal government for much-needed federal housing dollars. The agenda includes the lack of housing markets, low income levels and high costs of living, complex social challenges, aging infrastructure, homeownership and construction, and maintenance practices.

While our cultures are unique within each territory, we face many of the same challenges and we believe that joining forces will amplify our voices. Strength in numbers, Mr. Speaker.

We concluded the meeting with Minister Hussen by inviting him to come to Iqaluit to attend a pan-territorial housing ministers' meeting in June 2020. I look forward to providing an update to members on this alliance and our meeting with Minister Hussen.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister of Finance, Minister Hickes.

Minister's Statement 366 – 5(2): Iqaluit NULC Store Survey

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker and members, I rise today to invite my colleagues and Nunavummiut to complete the Iqaluit liquor commission store survey.

As you all know, we are in the last year of the three-year pilot project of the store. This project was created to change Nunavummiut's behaviour towards drinking. It is important we fill out the survey, as the answers will help the commission and finance staff understand the store's impacts on the community. It will also help improve operations of the Nunavut Liquor Commission. The questionnaire only takes about 10 minutes to complete and the answers will be confidential.

Mr. Speaker, from February 15 to March 15 the survey is available on the Department of Finance website at

www.gov.nu.ca/finance. I encourage all Nunavummiut who are aged 16 and over to participate in this survey. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Thank you. (interpretation) Continuing on with the orders of the day. Members' Statements. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Member Main.

Item 3: Members' Statements

Member's Statement 564 – 5(2): Blueprint for Action on Housing

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, my colleagues, Premier, and ministers.

Mr. Speaker, the housing minister had a statement previously and as regular MLAs we totally support the minister in his efforts to get more money from the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the regular members this morning. We will be asking many questions about housing this morning and my colleagues will be asking questions about housing in general. Everywhere in Nunavut everybody feels the housing shortage.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Main (interpretation): I will be quoting from the housing corporation's blueprint for action. It has helped me to understand the housing situation a great deal. It's a very good plan. I'll say it in English.

(interpretation ends) This is from page 4

of the blueprint, Mr. Speaker. "The fundamental strategic consideration for the Government of Nunavut with regards to housing is determining how it will manage to continue meeting the needs of its young and growing population, account for the increasing pressure for supportive housing options for Elders, and also address the legacy of underinvestment in the territory's infrastructure - within its financial constraints."

Mr. Speaker, the blueprint for action also on page 4 goes on to describe the situation with the shortage of housing. It says that "In 2004, the 10 Year Inuit Housing Action Plan, called for 3000 units..." Three thousand units, Mr. Speaker. Here we sit more than 15 years later and I believe that number has only grown. I believe the number is about 3,500 units now. It says here in the blueprint that "...housing investments over that time period has only managed to keep up with population growth."

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue and I hope the government can see the importance of continuing to shine light on the urgent need for better housing in Nunavut. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Members' Statements. Member for Aggu, (interpretation) Member Quassa.

Member's Statement 565 – 5(2): Inuktitut Terminology

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With this being Friday, just another day, I have some light-hearted

banter to offer, seeing as this is Language Week. With that being the case, it highlights the need to properly enunciate or pronounce Inuktitut words. As an example, we now use the root *iglu* to denote houses when all it used to mean was “snow house.” Inuit also differentiate the wooden houses as *iglurjuaq*, meaning a big wooden building.

Today we call the organizations handling housing as *iglulirijikkut* that some of us older Inuit imagine as holding small snow houses together when the proper terminology is more likely *iglurjualirijikkut* if talking about timber constructed housing.

I wanted to mention this other Inuktitut word as we need to use words in the proper context within the Assembly as we need to use Inuktitut properly, and though most Inuit speak it fluently, the repetitious usage of certain words sometimes makes us snicker due to its hilarity.

The term that the Minister of Education used quite properly when he was talking about important things that need to be done for the students, the word *pimmarik* was used properly there, but then some other dialects call the hon. members on the other side “*pimmariit*.” Where it can become slightly hilarious is when you consider the opposite meaning. Older Inuit would take it as meaning members on this side are not as decisive or are less capable.

>>*Laughter*

For that reason, I wanted to remind members when using Inuktitut to ensure we use the proper context so that the

listening and viewing audience can understand the meaning of the word. I believe some Inuit would find our usage of the language hilarious, especially when we mispronounce something or give the wrong meaning that is misunderstood. With that in mind, I rise to voice that this morning, so good morning.

>>*Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you very much. To clarify why I personally use the term “*pimmarik*” for the ministers is due to their capability of making the final decision within their appointed department. They have the final say in the matter under their purview, which is why I use our dialectal word “*pimmarik*” to denote that capability of being the final stoppage. Nonetheless, I concur with your statement that it can make one smile.

Continuing on. Members’ Statements.
Member for Gjoa Haven, Mr. Akoak.

**Member’s Statement 566 – 5(2):
Addressing Housing Shortage**

Mr. Akoak: *Quanaqquitit*, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation) Good morning, ministers, who are considered to be important.

>>*Laughter*

I rise this morning to voice the critical issue of homelessness, as many residents in Nunavut have no housing, and I need to advocate on their behalf and to try to help them as they don’t have any place to go to, with some adult children reaching into their 40s and older still residing with their aging parents. I ask

our government, “Why are we in this situation?” We have many residents who are homeless.

The federal government can provide a response if you ask them to (interpretation ends) “give me more money,” (interpretation) to provide more funding, and by observing that, the federal government accommodates foreigners and immigrants from across the oceans by providing a hotel room. (interpretation ends) They pay for people from across the ocean to stay at hotels. Why can’t they do that for our people in Nunavut? They should be able to.

(interpretation) I implore the government to assist our fellow residents of Nunavut who are homeless and increasing in number. I ask our government, (interpretation ends) hon. ministers, do your job and tell the federal government that we do need more housing. (interpretation) That is all I have to ask. (interpretation ends) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Just a suggestion to Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit and the ministers responsible who are listening, we need an Inuktitut translation for “honourable.”

>>Laughter

Continuing on, Members’ Statements. (interpretation) Member for Uqqummiut, Member Keyootak.

Member’s Statement 567 – 5(2): Honouring Iga Palluq

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say “good morning” to the people of Qikiqtarjuaq who are listen to and watching the proceedings, and to the people of Clyde River who are watching and listening, good morning, as well as to my colleagues here.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my pride. We always talk about our elders, the fact that we have to be proud of them and represent them truly. My colleague from Hall Beach is always saying that we need to be proud of our elders because they are the only ones who helped us make it up to where we are.

>>Applause

In the communities that we represent, we know who is the oldest in our community. Of our constituents, we know who the oldest people are and we have to be proud of them while they are still alive.

I would especially like to express my pride in a person who celebrated a birthday in Clyde River. The oldest woman now in Clyde River, Iga Attakalik Palluq recently celebrated her birthday along with the community. We have to celebrate that too because we represent them and because we have been asked to represent our people.

Please join me in celebrating the 98-year-old Iga Attakalik Palluq, who is the oldest woman in Clyde River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Yes, we celebrate her birthday. Members' Statements. Member for Cambridge Bay, Member Ehaloak.

**Member's Statement 568 – 5(2):
Encouraging Nunavummiut to
Become Organ Donors**

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) First of all, I want to correct myself. The Nunavut Law students are going to Finland and not Newfoundland.

>> *Laughter*

Mr. Speaker, I have a very emotional success story that I would like to tell all Nunavummiut. My little sister, Millie Qitupana Kuliktana, was diagnosed in 2010 with a rare disease, pulmonary hypertension. It was progressive and threatened to shorten her lifespan, with no cure.

Her only option was for a lung transplant with a success rate of 50-50. With determination, power and love, she chose to proceed. After living and waiting in Edmonton for over a year and training for her procedure, she got the call in October 2019 for her double-lung transplant. Today she is recovering and waiting to return home.

I encourage Nunavummiut to consider being donors as it saves lives, as I have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Members' Statements. Member for Quttiktuq, Member Akeeagok.

**Member's Statement 569 – 5(2):
Dialectal Differences of Inuktitut**

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today being Friday, as language month is coming to an end, we will keep using our language anyway.

I would like to thank the interpreters and the people who transcribe the *Blues*. When I speak Inuktitut, some people don't understand what I'm saying. Even my wife tells me, "That's not the proper way of saying that in Inuktitut." I get that a lot. To the people who try to help and correct me, I thank them very much and I want them to continue doing so. Sometimes when you make a mistake, you don't make any sense.

As I was growing up in Grise Fiord, the oldest woman who we called our grandmother, Minnie Allakariallak, used to come and tell us that when they moved up there from Inukjuak and met Baffin people for the first time, she would laugh about my father when he would say "*taga-taga*." It was like he would always end up rushing.

>> *Laughter*

Of course it was a misunderstanding. She had been trying to say, "Can you do it a little bit later?" My father, though, recognized it as "Can you do it now?" I have misunderstandings too.

When the people of Inukjuak arrived, someone was asked in Inuktitut to go and get a shovel, and then they came back with a spoon. That's an example of different dialects, growing up in different places, and the way we speak Inuktitut is a little different from other

communities.

Sometimes I think I'm speaking proper Inuktitut, but then I realize I make mistakes and once spoken Inuktitut is standardized, we won't be guessing what we're talking about anymore and we can have more proper Inuktitut conversations and not just guess what the person is saying.

When I'm not sure how to say a term, I say it in English. It's a very easy backup, but with Inuktitut, we have to proceed with that and we have language month and we thank the government for providing language month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you very much. What you're saying is very clear. Some dialects and some English terminology and Inuktitut terminology are very hard to understand sometimes.

Continuing on. Members' Statements. Member for South Baffin, Member Joanasie.

Member's Statement 570 – 5(2): From Cape Dorset to Kinngait

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on International Mother Language Day.

I want to acknowledge that the people of Cape Dorset voted to return to their traditional Inuktitut name of Kinngait. After the plebiscite, the hamlet decided that they want to have Kinngait as the place name. There are some people with concerns because Cape Dorset is

internationally known for its carvings and printmaking. It's known as Cape Dorset, but the other name, Kinngait, is also well known.

Mr. Speaker, if we can remember, other communities did the same thing. Iqaluit used to be called Frobisher Bay. My other constituency community of Kimmirut used to be called Lake Harbour and that got changed in 1996.

Mr. Speaker, I expect that it will be called Kinngait on a daily basis now. The people of Kinngait are very proud of their community. They say "Kinngait-Kinngait-Kinngait" when they're cheering in a hockey game.

I would like to recognize today being International Mother Language Day. I express my pride in the people of Kinngait and the fact that they wanted to have their traditional community name back.

However, after the Member for Amittuq asks questions to the Department of Community and Government Services, (interpretation ends) at the appropriate time I will not be asking questions on this matter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Laughter*

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Members' Statements. I have no more names on my list. Continuing on. Returns to Oral Questions. Item 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Continuing on. Oral Questions. (interpretation) Member for Aggu, Member Quassa.

Item 6: Oral Questions**Question 772 – 5(2): Partnering for Housing Solutions**

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that you will concur with me when I say that addressing the housing crisis in Nunavut will require a quadripartite partnership between the federal government, the territorial government, Inuit organizations, and industry.

Mr. Speaker, recent news reports have suggested that the new federal Minister of Northern Affairs, who recently paid his first visit to Nunavut in that role, has publicly recognized the need for significant new federal investments in Nunavut housing. Can the minister describe to us and Nunavummiut what discussions he has had with the federal minister when he was here presenting on this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Housing is being recognized as a real issue. There is overcrowding and a shortage of housing in Nunavut, and the member for Gjoa Haven told us to work on it. We are continuously working on addressing the housing shortage.

With regard to the comments about Minister Vandal, he was in Rankin Inlet, but I did not meet with him in Rankin

Inlet. However, when we were in Ottawa, we had a short meeting with him and we gave him a copy of the (interpretation ends) blueprint for action (interpretation) on housing. We informed him of the shortage of housing. However, we can't just wait for the federal government to move forward on housing. They really need to provide assistance and I said last fall that Nunavut Tunngavik needs to assist with the housing shortage because they represent the beneficiaries, but they have not approached us to provide assistance. Mr. Speaker, that's what I can say this morning. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Quassa.

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The housing corporation's current business plan indicates that the corporation will "Continue engagement with Regional Inuit Associations on potential collaborations" on housing. That is what it indicates. With that being the case, the minister is well aware that that's what the housing corporation indicates. It also states here that they met with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association to discuss housing. I think it only refers to Inuit-owned lands. Can the minister describe what specific outcomes have flowed from those discussions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since becoming the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, personally I have not met with the Inuit organizations. I have just pleaded to them from this House that we need help.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Speaker (interpretation): Your second and final supplementary question, Member Quassa.

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even though he stated previously that he met with them, it turns out he still hasn't even met with them. That is unbelievable! I imagine they are just waiting for the chance to meet with him. Instead of just waiting, he should be approaching them.

(interpretation ends) It is difficult to understand the magnitude of the housing challenge that faces us. I was pleased to note that the minister's recent statement on the Nunavut Housing Corporation's upcoming program review indicated that the corporation is open to considering new ideas to address the housing crisis, including "tiny homes" and modular construction methods. Can the minister indicate the extent to which this review will invite input and collaboration from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and other partner organizations? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At any point in time I did not say that I have met with the Inuit organizations. My door is open to chat with them about our needs for housing.

Mr. Speaker, I just mentioned earlier this week in my minister's statement that we are doing a review of the overall housing aspects. In that review we will include how we can better address homeownership in Nunavut and that

includes the studies on the small homes projects. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Question 773 – 5(2): Staff Housing Policy

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask questions to the Minister of Human Resources regarding the provision of staff housing.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, under the new GN Staff Housing Policy it's clear on page 5, "All current indeterminate and term employees may be eligible for staff housing..." I believe we're talking about a workforce close to 5,000 or 3,000 something if you're talking about filled positions.

Mr. Speaker, I listened yesterday with interest to discussions regarding staff housing being provided for housekeepers. Mr. Speaker, in my own constituency, I represent several housekeepers, some of whom are long-term government employees. Mr. Speaker, it's clear under the policy that they may be eligible and there is a form that they can fill out to apply for staff housing.

My first question for the minister is: when housekeepers across Nunavut apply for staff housing, can they expect an approval? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for Human Resources, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The short answer to that is yes, but there are, as you say, a lot of employees across the territory looking for housing and the housing allocation committee will take a look at it to see in which community, which housing needs are more critical than others. I can't see why they would not be as there was recently a job advertised, as my colleague said, for those positions to include housing, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. Obviously there are other government employees who are listening to my question and the minister's response. Some of these employees may be on the same pay scale as housekeepers.

(interpretation ends) My next question is: can other government employees at a similar pay scale as a housekeeper position across Nunavut expect approval for staff housing allocation under the allocation committee established under the new Staff Housing Policy?

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Human Resources, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased with the questions from my colleague about housing issues. Further, Human Resources is a separate department that has overall control of government staff housing, whether it is for various departments in the regions and the different ministers' offices.

The assistant deputy ministers are now sitting on the housing allocation committee. They determine whether a vacant position, a new position, or a position that is staffed qualifies for staff housing. There are differences in urgency for staff housing in the communities. Some require housing immediately while others face a housing shortage. The committee takes these issues into consideration and they allocate units based on various factors, such as which position receives housing if a unit is available in a given community. This committee deliberates on these issues.

I have no idea, however, which position would be a priority as each situation is different, including the urgency for the position in the community and based on the importance of the position, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Your second and final supplementary question, Member Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) On page 6 of the Staff Housing Policy it lists three categories of employees, and the first category is health, safety, and security. Mr. Speaker, I think that if the government were to try to provide staff housing to every single employee in the civil service, it would be a very difficult task. There are simply not enough units currently under the staff housing stock.

Can the minister confirm that the employees listed in category 1, health, safety, and security, will not be denied staff housing based on arbitrary decisions under the allocation

committee, for example, allocating staff housing to housekeepers?
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The housing allocation committee does a comprehensive review of the different positions and determines which position requires housing if a unit is available, and if a new position is created that requires housing, it is only when this new position is going to be advertised that the housing need is identified.

Back then, units were set aside for different departments and when a position was finally advertised, that unit would be allocated to that position. This resulted in many units remaining vacant for long periods. Now the practice is that when a new position is ready for advertising, only then is the housing need or allocation determined.

The committee conducts a comprehensive review to allocate housing. Once their review is done and they make a decision on which position will be allocated housing, the decision can be appealed and a formal complaint submitted. The appeal would look at the complaint and there would be a careful review of the situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Niaqunngu, Member Angnakak.

Question 774 – 5(2): Affordable Housing

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation) Good morning. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to revisit some affordable housing issues that I first raised with the minister during our fall sitting. I am sure that he has had a chance to look at them more fully over the last few months.

Mr. Speaker, as you will recall, I pointed out last fall that although our territory's *Residential Tenancies Act* protects tenants from having their rent increased more than once per year, it does not appear to provide for any cap on the amount by which it could be increased. I also pointed out that a number of other Canadian jurisdictions do provide for legislative caps in rental increases.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that my colleagues from the other three Iqaluit constituencies have heard the same horror stories that I have about the out-of-control rental situation here in the capital.

When I asked the minister last fall if he would commit to reviewing this provision of the legislation, he said that he could not do so. Can the minister provide a clear explanation today for why he is unable or unwilling to do so? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are doing the review and in the review we will look at the rent scale. We hope to address that with the review and the review will be done next year.

For the question she just asked, I chatted with the president and we are going to look at that. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to remind the minister that I am talking about private rent, not public housing rentals, and that's good to now. I hope that that could be reviewed because it is out of control here in the capital.

Mr. Speaker, I was glad to hear the minister's statement this week in which he indicated that an independent, as you referred to, review of the various Nunavut Housing Corporation programs and practices will take place. Can he assure me that this review will focus on improving the affordability of housing in Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Yes. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Your second and final supplementary question, Member Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another outstanding issue is the status of the City of Iqaluit's new

land administration by-law, which was developed with the goal of addressing this community's needs, including the affordability of housing. I think that I have asked no fewer than three ministers about this issue, so I'm going to try again today. Is the Minister responsible for Housing aware of whether or not the by-law has been fully approved by the GN and, if he is aware, can he tell us what the answer is? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) We build houses; we are not into the question she is asking. It should be referred to the Minister of Community and Government Services. (interpretation) Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Member Towntongie.

Question 775 – 5(2): Blueprint for Action on Housing

Ms. Towntongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say "good morning" to the people of Rankin Inlet, my aunt, Maryanne Tattuinee, Violet Twyee, and Chesterfield Inlet elders Pitausak Leonie Putulik and Elizabeth Tautu, if they are listening.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation.

As the minister is aware, all communities in Nunavut are suffering from a shortage of housing and every

single unit counts. It's nice when people have houses.

The Nunavut Housing Corporation's most recent annual report indicates that almost 350 public housing tenants are classified as high-income tenants, earning over \$100,000 per year.

Mr. Speaker, it is my position that we should encourage high-income public housing tenants to become private homeowners, which would free up public housing units for people in greater need. My question is: what is the Nunavut Housing Corporation's position on this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. We don't refuse any housing applicant and maybe they have higher income after they move into their unit. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, we have a rental scale program that certain people making so much money, they pay a certain rent for the unit that they are renting. Mr. Speaker, we have the Tenant to Owner Program which assists tenants in buying the public housing unit that they are renting. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Towntongie.

Ms. Towntongie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation) I'm sorry, but I will be speaking in English.

(interpretation ends) Action 12 in the

government's *Blueprint for Action on Housing* indicates that the housing corporation will review the best "possible development of a fixed-rent subsidized housing model targeting high-income public housing tenants..." Can the minister update the House on what work has been accomplished to date in this area? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The *Blueprint for Action on Housing* takes time and it takes a whole-of-government approach, plus our partners.

As for the question she is asking, I will have to get back to the member on that as to which stage we are at on that particular question she is asking. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your second and final supplementary, Member Towntongie.

Ms. Towntongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for that response. I have been pushing the Nunavut Housing Corporation to review the public housing rent scale for some time, so I was very pleased to hear the minister confirm that a review will take place. Will he commit to me that this review will address the issue of high-income public housing tenants? There are 350 public housing tenants throughout Nunavut who are earning over \$100,000. If they are able to become private homeowners, it would free up much-needed housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) This is a really good exercise. (interpretation) Thank you for the discussion on housing. I am pleased to hear the question, Mr. Speaker.

I can respond to the question by saying that we all want to see more homeowners and we are really pushing for it. I could use myself as an example. I was a public housing tenant in 1980, but I worked to get my own house back then, which is why I am committed to this. You also want to see people work hard to attain homeownership and to have people who can maintain their own homes. When they move to a private home, then we move others into their previous units. That is the goal. This is why we are pushing homeownership in our action plan to try to improve that and it will be included in the review. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Gjoa Haven, Member Akoak.

Question 776 – 5(2): Tenant Engagement Campaign

Mr. Akoak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Good morning to my wife because she's watching now.

>> *Laughter*

Good morning, Nipillu and to my *irngutak* who are in Taloyoak at the moment.

My questions are to the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

As the minister will recall, I asked him some questions last year about the Nunavut Housing Corporation's "Tenant Engagement Campaign" back in June 2019.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the goal of encouraging public housing tenants to be aware of the costs of maintaining their units and to take proactive steps to keep their units in good condition.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister update the House today on the status of the Nunavut Housing Corporation's "Tenant Engagement Campaign"? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank him for that question. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, the Nunavut Housing Corporation bears the cost. The cost for maintaining a public housing unit is \$26,700 annually. It's very important for us to have a good relationship with the tenant and we do have a tenant engagement dialogue on how our clients can better maintain their home and that will reduce at the end of the day the maintenance costs of that unit. It's going along well, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation) Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I last raised this issue with the minister, I emphasized the need to make public housing tenants aware of the importance of obtaining insurance for their household effects. Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate how the tenant engagement campaign has addressed this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you. My seat is getting hot this morning.

>> *Laughter*

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, when we give the tenant, let's say, house 35, just a number, we encourage the homeowner to buy that insurance for personal effects. That is the responsibility of the homeowner or the tenant or renter. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your second and final supplementary question, Member Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, people lose a lot of personal effects when the house is destroyed. I'm hoping that your department will encourage the tenants to buy some insurance; make it effective.

Mr. Speaker, information published by the Nunavut Housing Corporation indicates that there are over 5,580 public housing units in the territory. This is not part of my question, but we have over 30,000 people in Nunavut and a lot of them nowadays are living with their parents and that, so there are a lot of

homeless people.

My question, though, is: can the minister describe what information is currently being provided through the tenant engagement campaign to help residents prevent the spread of mould in their units? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When tenants find out that there is mould in their units, we write a letter to inform the local housing organization. If it is a small amount of mould, they are instructed to clean it with bleach in order to alleviate the problem or to prevent it from spreading. Usually that's the extent of the dialogue between the local housing organization and the tenants themselves. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Amittuq, Member Kaernerck.

Question 777 – 5(2): Mould Infestation and Remediation in Public Housing Units

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my fellow residents of Amittuq. I would also like to direct my question to the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation so that I can make his seat hotter.

>> *Laughter*

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, as the minister is aware, the Nunavut Housing Corporation's *Rent Scale Procedures Manual* provides the detailed rules for

how local housing organizations are to calculate their housing units.

Section 59 of the manual provides for a “unit condition rating deduction.” In plain language, the rent for a new public housing unit that is in good condition will be more than that for an old public housing unit that is not in good condition. However, this section of the manual does not clearly address the issue of mould infestation.

Can the minister confirm that rent deductions are applied to public housing units that are suffering from mould infestation and damage?
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation) I thank the member for his question. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I believe over the year we have reduced rent for some of our clients. I just don’t know how many there are, but for reducing the rent on units that have mould, I don’t have that level of detail. We have spent over \$10 million in mould reme...

An Hon. Member: Remediation.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Remediation. Thank you, education minister.

>>Laughter

...mould remediation. We have spent \$10 million to date in addressing the mould issues in our homes.
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary question, (interpretation) Member Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased that there has been a reduction in rents.

(interpretation ends) The Nunavut Housing Corporation’s most recent annual report for the 2018-19 fiscal year was tabled in the Legislative Assembly during our recent fall sitting. The annual report states that the corporation has “...taken steps to proactively address the issue of mould in our housing units with a made-in-Nunavut approach to remediating and preventing mould.”

Can the minister clarify how much the Nunavut Housing Corporation has budgeted for mould remediation during the current 2019-2020 fiscal year? You mentioned that \$10 million was used, so how much of that has been used?
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As soon as we are informed that there is mould in a unit, we take immediate action to remediate the unit. I can’t tell you how much we have set aside or budgeted for mould remediation, but we take immediate action. Instead of focusing on the budget, we take immediate action to remediate the units. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary question, Member Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When conducting my constituency tour, I often get visits from constituents who are having difficulties with the local housing association. When they complain about their unit, they are told it has been repaired or the maintainer had already visited their unit. We also live in the Arctic. When I was shown a unit with mould on the floor, I saw there was ice build-up and when it melts, it turns to mould.

My question for the minister is: when mould remediation began in my constituencies of Hall Beach and Igloolik, how much money was spent for those two communities last year and how much do you have budgeted for the 2020-21 fiscal year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As soon as I'm informed by email by any Member of the House indicating that a certain house has to be remediated, once we see such an email, I make sure to forward that email to Terry Audla, the President of the Nunavut Housing Corporation. I have yet to see any requests to get mould remediated in his communities. As soon as we're informed that there's a unit that needs remediating, we make sure we take immediate action. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Netsilik, Member Kaern...Qirngnuq.

Question 778 – 5(2): Local Housing Organizations

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy I got a new name.

>> *Laughter*

I say "good morning" to my fellow residents of Netsilik and my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation. This is to ensure that he knows he isn't being overlooked.

>> *Laughter*

Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the hard-working employees and board members at the Kugaaruk and Taloyoak LHOs. Mr. Speaker, they work very hard to make sure that they maintain the houses in both Kugaaruk and Taloyoak.

Mr. Speaker, the Nunavut Housing Corporation's business plan indicates that it has been working to update and sign new "master management agreements" with all of Nunavut's local housing organizations.

Can the minister indicate which local housing organizations have not yet signed the new master management agreement with the Nunavut Housing Corporation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. Are you asking about the (interpretation ends) local housing authorities management agreements?

(interpretation) Mr. Speaker, we have completed the master management agreement and have given it to all the local housing organizations in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation for providing a clear response. Mr. Speaker, I learned how to speak English, so I will do so.

>> *Laughter*

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, the rent that public housing tenants pay is essential for our local housing organizations. I am very pleased to note that the Nunavut Housing Corporation's most recent annual report indicates that the public housing rent collection rates in Kugaaruk and Taloyoak are both higher than the territorial average. In fact Taloyoak's rate collection is now the second highest in the territory.

>> *Applause*

Can the minister describe what specific actions the NHC has taken to help LHOs address the issue of rent arrears?

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I applaud the member for recognizing his community for the second highest rate in rental payments.

As for the question regarding rental arrears, we work closely with the LHOs in terms of collecting rental arrears. What we do too is we approach the employee to see if they can go to their employer to enquire about garnishing the rental arrears on his or her home.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) As the minister is aware, Action 14 in the Nunavut Housing Corporation's *Blueprint for Action on Housing* states that the NHC will "assess the feasibility of working with Local Housing Organizations to explore an expansion of LHO maintenance services to include private homeowners in communities that lack local contractors." Can the minister update the Legislative Assembly today on the status of this work?

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member for Amittuq pushes hard for elders too. There are quite a number of elders who own private homes now. It's hard having your own home and sometimes they have difficulties just because of their age and some communities don't have many services or places where they can buy parts for their boilers.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I really encourage the LHOs to assist these homeowners, especially with the elders in terms of addressing their furnace issues. We have this \$3,000

annual budget earmarked for the elders in terms of getting their homes' furnaces and hot water tanks repaired. We can use that money to help the homeowners, especially the elders program. I encourage them to go to the LHOs and ask for help because we don't want to see these elders' homes freezing up in the winter because there is nobody to help them. The LHOs are there to help as well. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Uqqummiut, Member Keyootak.

Question 779 – 5(2): Conservation Officer Vacancy in Qikiqtarjuaq

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not quite sure which minister to direct my question to, but I raised these questions previously in the House about Qikiqtarjuaq's lack of a conservation officer because of the lack of housing. Perhaps I should direct this to the Department of Environment.

First of all, for a very long time the community has not had a conservation officer because of the lack of housing, and I also know there is no plan to build a new house in Qikiqtarjuaq. What has the Department of Environment done in efforts to get a conservation officer for Qikiqtarjuaq? What has the minister done along with the Minister of Housing to address this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Minister of Environment, Minister Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. In Qikiqtarjuaq there has not been a conservation officer for a very long time and that is true. We have been having trouble getting more staff housing there, but there is an Inuk working right there now who would be assisting the conservation officer. We have requested a staff house, but we have not received approval yet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Keyootak.

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for explaining that. Qikiqtarjuaq has not had a conservation officer for a very long time. This is a very important position and strongly needed there. Can the minister perhaps explain when work can be started to provide staff housing? If they are not going to build staff housing, maybe they should make different considerations because Qikiqtarjuaq has not had a conservation officer for many years because of the housing issue. The government knows about this, but nothing seems to be getting done. The only thing we have heard now is that they didn't get approval. What will they be doing next? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have requested staff housing and as I stated, we have not gotten approval yet. We will keep asking for it. Right now there is someone working there from Monday to Friday, 9:00 to 5:00. Additionally, a

conservation officer does occasionally go to Qikiqtarjuaq to work.

We are pushing hard for it, but when there is no housing available, there is nothing we can do. We will keep trying to get staff housing so that Qikiqtarjuaq can get a conservation officer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your second and final supplementary question, Member Keyootak.

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I acknowledge that currently there is a temporary employee working there and I know that they are not an actual conservation officer, but they having been providing help. What are the plans for that person? Will he be receiving training or is that person just going to be helping in the office for the interim before the Department of Environment provides an employee? Is that person going to be promoted to a conservation officer or is that person just there for the interim until they get a conservation officer? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That Inuk employee currently working while Qikiqtarjuaq does not have a conservation officer will be doing the work right now. We will look to see if the job will be maintained after getting a conservation officer.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Pangnirtung, Member Nakashuk.

Question 780 – 5(2): Independent Review of Housing Programs and Services

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy that it is my turn now. Good morning and I say “good day” to the people of Pangnirtung.

This morning I would like to direct my question to the Minister responsible for Nunavut Housing Corporation.

This is not going to be the first time that the minister has heard this. The minister will be aware that the Nunavut Housing Corporation’s (interpretation ends) *Tenant Relations Manual* (interpretation) provides detailed rules for how local housing organizations assign points to public housing applicants. I have heard concerns from my constituents about the current point rating system.

For example, although it is understandable that young adults who are living alone are not going to get priority for a limited number of public housing units, as well as singles, couples and couples who are not producing children, housing looks at the number of people that would be living in the house. Though it is understandable that they do that, I would like to ask the Minister of Housing: with the upcoming review of its programs and practices, will they be reviewing the public housing point rating system? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the member is asking about tenants that are living in overcrowded housing. We have

an agreement with the local housing organizations because they are responsible for this issue. With the lack of housing, some people are asked to move through an agreement where a tenant follows the local policies. If they feel that a tenant's house is too big, then they may be asked to move to a smaller unit. That is in the agreement. Whenever there is a family that is experiencing overcrowding and there is another person that has more space than they need, then there is an agreement where they can trade houses. We allow the local housing organizations to do that because it is a part of their responsibility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary, Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason I'm asking this question is because in Pangnirtung there are 112 on the waiting list for public housing. There are 62 single units and half of them are couples with children. (interpretation ends) That is half of the waiting list. (interpretation) They are waiting for public housing.

(interpretation ends) Can the minister describe the extent to which local housing organizations will be involved in the Nunavut Housing Corporation's upcoming review of its programs and practices? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation) All communities need houses built, and I'm afraid not all communities get homes constructed every year. Many people are

on the waiting; it is not just Pangnirtung. There are many people waiting.

With regard to people who apply for public housing, communities with the highest numbers of people on their waiting list or that have many people who have been waiting for a very long time, are prioritized. We use the money we get from the federal government and the \$17.5 million from Government of Nunavut. We use this money and we prioritize construction in the communities following what I just described.

I encourage MLAs in their constituencies to meet with the local housing organizations and encourage people to apply for housing. All of the communities are competing with each other for public housing. For this coming year, we will be building 70 public housing units. We encourage people to apply because we always look at the numbers first in order to prioritize the communities for construction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your second and final supplementary, Member Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question I had was: in the review, will you be reviewing the (interpretation ends) programs and practices (interpretation) in consultation with the local housing organizations? I didn't get a response to that question.

The last question I would like to ask the minister is: (interpretation ends) will the minister commit to tabling the terms of reference for the Nunavut Housing

Corporation's upcoming review of its programs and practices during our upcoming spring sitting? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize if I didn't respond to her question. There is overcrowding and there are tenants who have too more room than they need while other tenants don't have enough room. This is handled by the local housing organizations.

As to that program review, we will be reviewing the rent scale to make ensure that they're not paying more rent than they should be. After we conduct the review, I'm not sure when, but perhaps during this fall session or next year, we will be tabling the results. (interpretation ends) I assure the House that I will be tabling the review once it's completed. (interpretation) Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Kugluktuk, Member Kamingoak.

Question 781 – 5(2): Homeownership Program Review

Ms. Kamingoak: *Koana*, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to the people of Kugluktuk and my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation.

As the minister will recall, we exchanged correspondence last year concerning the issue of the NHC's homeownership programs.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard a number of concerns from my constituents about the length of time it takes for the NHC to approve homeownership program applications.

For example, although the minister's letter to me of October 14 indicated that there were 25 applicants from Kugluktuk that were classified as being "pending and/or waitlisted," the NHC's most recent annual report indicates that only one application from the community of Kugluktuk was approved in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Can the minister indicate what specific problems the NHC is facing with respect to its timelines for reviewing homeownership program applications? *Koana*, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the issues that we find that we have difficulty with is when the homeowner applies for the Home Renovation Program, in this case the availability of the local contractor that is capable of doing that type of work which the homeowner requires. I can tell you that I have a constituent who was going to be travelling from Naujaat to Kugaaruk to do some home repair programs for the individual up in Kugaaruk. Those are the issues that we're faced with and it's a real problem and we hope to address that in the coming years. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member

Kamingoak.

Ms. Kamingoak: *Koana*, Mr. Speaker. As the minister will recall, he tabled a “homeownership program review” during the Legislative Assembly’s fall sitting that the Nunavut Housing Corporation had previously commissioned from a consulting company. Earlier this week he informed the Legislative Assembly that the NHC’s upcoming review of “housing programs and practices” will include a review of homeownership programs. Can the minister clarify how the upcoming work will be different from the review that the NHC previously undertook? *Koana*, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) We all want to see the homeownership program take off much like the one that we had back in the NWT days. I keep telling the House that, and I keep hearing from my constituents, and indeed from all across Nunavut that this was the best program that ever happened to the north and why can’t we make it happen again? I have been telling them that I’m working very hard to making it a reality and I hope to see it happen while we are here before we are dissolved. That is the very reason why we are doing a review on it, on how we can make it work for Nunavut once again. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your final supplementary, Member Kamingoak.

Ms. Kamingoak: *Koana*, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his response.

The homeownership program review report that the minister tabled last fall contained 18 specific recommendations. Can the minister clarify if the Nunavut Housing Corporation has decided to implement all, some, or none of these recommendations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) These reports tell us what would be the best practices in terms of delivering housing across Nunavut, and certainly we want to work with the recommendations within the report. I can say that we will attempt to do what’s recommended within the report. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Members, please note that the time for question period has expired. Member Kaernerck.

Motion 064 – 5(2): Extension of Question Period

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 39(7), I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, that the time for question period be extended. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. The motion is in order and it is not debatable. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried and question period is extended by half an hour.

Oral Questions. Member for Tununiq, Member Qamaniq.

Question 782 – 5(2): Staff Housing

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my fellow residents of Tununiq, especially our elders 80 years and older, especially Gamalial Kilukishak, my uncle Paniloo Sangoya, Kamanik Sangoya, Elisapee Ootoova, and the elders in our community.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation and they concern the issue of staff housing.

As the minister is probably aware, there are a number of residents of the territory who are long-term employees of the Government of Nunavut and long-term staff housing tenants. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that when these individuals retire from their jobs, they are required to vacate their staff housing units because the units are assigned to an employee's position, not to the individual.

Mr. Speaker, in cases where the employee is originally from outside of Nunavut, they may choose to return to their home community upon retirement. However, when it comes to lifelong residents of a community and Nunavut, most of whom are Inuit, when they retire, they are required to vacate their units because they are no longer working for the Government of Nunavut. When they vacate their government staff housing unit, they have to place their names on a waiting list for public housing.

I want to ask the minister: can the minister indicate if the Nunavut Housing Corporation has worked with the

Department of Human Resources on this issue to examine how to transition government employees approaching retirement age to public housing so that there is a unit available upon their retirement? Have they examined that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The tenants currently within our (interpretation ends) staff housing (interpretation) units, I have been asked what the policy is as they will soon be retiring and that they have applied for a public housing unit. We feel for them, but when the housing organization is aware that this individual will retire on a certain date, they know the person will need public housing. We want them to apply to the local housing organizations to be included on the waiting list prior to their retirement. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had actually asked if the minister has worked with the Minister of Human Resources on resolving this matter, but you didn't respond to that. Perhaps he will respond at a later time. I will speak English, Mr. Speaker.

(interpretation ends) I recognize and understand that public housing unit allocations are the responsibility of local housing organizations. Can the minister indicate if the Nunavut Housing

Corporation has considered working with local housing organizations to look at options such as priority listings for individuals in the situation that I have described? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must apologize. My mind was wandering off and my apologies.

In terms of the first question, I would like to try to answer that again. I haven't talked with the Minister of HR in terms of how we can assist the person that's renting public housing, but I do encourage the renter or the person occupying the staff housing to go to our LHOs and put their names on the needs list.

Mr. Speaker, can he reiterate his question and I'll try to attempt to answer it. (interpretation) Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Please repeat your question for clarification, Member Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I understand, being that it is public housing, it's the responsibility of the local housing organization. The minister has indicated that the Nunavut Housing Corporation has considered working with the local housing organization to look at things such as a priority wait-list.

As I stated earlier, there are people who have lived in government staff housing and when they retire from their positions, they have to vacate their homes. It is these individuals that I am referring to. Has the Nunavut Housing

Corporation ever considered working with local housing organizations to look at options such as priority waiting lists for these individuals; in other words, long-term employees? They might be waiting for a long time for that reason. That is what I was trying to ask. I hope that was clear. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Speaker. I apologize.

Speaker (interpretation): I don't think I heard it. You corrected it to Speaker. Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that, Mr. Qamaniq. Thank you.

Applicants who are already waiting become the priority. I don't know if former GN employees are put on a (interpretation ends) priority list, (interpretation) but they become a part of the list. There are many people on the list and some of them have been waiting for five, six, or seven years, unfortunately, because of the shortage of housing. I apologize. (interpretation ends) It is a stark reality for everyone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your final supplementary, Member Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will speak in English. (interpretation ends) A longstanding issue of concern in the community of Pond Inlet has been the issue of long-term vacant staff housing units. Can the minister update the House today on how the Nunavut Housing Corporation is working with the Department of Human Resources to address this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Nunavut Housing Corporation used to deal with that allocation file, but we do not do that anymore. We build houses, and the responsibility has been turned over to the Department of HR. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Member Lightstone.

Question 783 – 5(2): New Staff Housing Policy

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Nunavut Housing Corporation's delight, my questions today are for the Minister of Human Resources.

>> *Laughter*

My questions are in relation to the new Staff Housing Policy. Yesterday I applauded the government on this initiative amending the policy to allow departments more discretion to align staff housing with Inuit employment plans. The new policy also designates a new allocation committee with representation of all departments and agencies, which is chaired by the Department of Human Resources. This allocation, as per the policy, meets bi-weekly.

My first question for the minister is: have you kept yourself informed on the progress of these new staff housing committees? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Human Resources, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from my colleague and give the Housing minister a breather. Mr. Speaker, I am kept abreast as much as I need to be on the new allocation committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Health indicated that his department had utilized this new policy to secure staff housing for six positions which were restricted to Inuit only.

I assume the minister may not have this information or this level of detailed information, but I always welcome receiving additional information through returns to oral questions. My next question is: how many departments to date have submitted requests using this new Staff Housing Policy which restricts competitions for Inuit, and how many of those requested have been approved? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague is correct. That finer detailed information I would not be involved in as minister, Mr. Speaker. That kind of information is dealt with by the committees. I would assume that it fluctuates depending on departments, so I wouldn't have that kind of detailed information, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you.

Your final supplementary question, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I had mentioned, I assumed the minister wouldn't have that level of detail, but I also mentioned that I am always welcome to receive additional information through a return to oral question.

For my final question, as the Assembly knows, I have been tracking statistical information with relation to Inuit participation in staff housing. Most recently, as of March 31, 2019, Inuit participation in staff housing saw a minor increase of four employees, or 1 percent. I would like to ask: has the minister done the same monitoring or tracking the level of Inuit participation in staff housing, and if so, would he be able to provide us with an update? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be more than happy to provide that kind of detail that my colleague is asking for at an appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Hudson Bay, Member Rumbolt.

Question 784 – 5(2): Public and Staff Housing Community Allocations

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. I have three different questions today, and considering that the Minister of the Housing Corporation's seat has had a chance to cool off, I will direct my questions to the Minister

responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

>> *Laughter*

As the minister will recall, the Legislative Assembly approved the Nunavut Housing Corporation's 2020-21 capital estimates during our recent fall sitting. However, although the funding is now in place for the construction of new public and staff housing units across Nunavut, the actual list for which communities these units will be constructed in has not been formally made public through tabling in the House.

Mr. Speaker, this is a direct contrast to the practice that has been in place in recent years. Although Members of the Legislative Assembly have been provided with the information, it is important that local housing organizations and other constituents also know where the new housing units are going.

Can the minister clearly explain why he is currently not willing to table this important information? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for giving me a bit of air time.

I did not say at any time that I was not willing to table the allocation for the housing that we are building. I will let the members know which communities are getting public and staff housing.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a letter from the minister. It's dated February 18 and in it he stated where I asked if he would be tabling this information and his answer was no. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, during the Legislative Assembly's sitting of November 4, 2019, the minister stated that he had directed his officials to "initiate an independent review of the allocation system and the rental scale." Earlier this week the minister provided an update on this review. However, although the minister's statement referred to homeownership programs and the public housing rent scale, it did not clearly refer to the housing allocation system. For the record, will the independent review also consider the public housing community construction allocation system, yes or no? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That might have been an oversight on the minister's statement that I did, but I commit to what the member is asking. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your second and final supplementary question, Member Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister's statement this week indicated that a "qualified consulting

firm" will conduct the independent review. For the record, which firm has been contracted to do this work? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser: Mr. Speaker, I had two companies that have been brought up to me and the work is scheduled to start April 1 and I'll have to get back to the member one which actual one of the two had been identified. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Niaqunngu, Member Angnakak.

Question 785 – 5(2): Workplace Wellness

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Human Resources.

As the minister will recall, I have been raising concerns regarding the issues of workplace harassment and bullying since I was first elected to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the creation of a body to specifically address the issue of workplace wellness in the government is something that I have been advocating for, which is why I was very pleased to hear the announcement in the Budget Address that the Department of Human Resources will be establishing a new division for this purpose. Can the minister highlight what the first priorities of the new division will be? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Human Resources, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the concerns my colleagues have on bullying or the need to stop bullying and workplace harassment. I always appreciated my colleagues' concerns on this and many other matters concerning the wellness of our staff because this government is only as healthy as the staff we have.

Mr. Speaker, some of our priorities include providing employees, managers, and senior leaders clear expectations and directions under the GN for expectation of a harassment and conflict-free workplace. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to hear that things are starting to roll in the area. I feel it's very important.

As the minister will recall, the Premier issued an announcement on October 11, 2018 in which he indicated that the government would be reviewing its harassment policy. I'm happy to hear that is starting. This process was to involve also the creation of a working group composed of female deputy ministers and other experts.

As of today, it appears that the government's current Harassment-Free Workplace Policy still has not been changed since January 2016. Can the minister clarify where this work stands now? Is it just starting? Where are they at with this work? Is this at the

beginning or are we in the middle or the end? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate my colleague's concerns and questions regarding this matter.

Mr. Speaker, this committee has been working hard and is well on their way to tackle this very touchy and difficult issue. Mr. Speaker, the deputy ministers have sat down and actually had meetings, and they had meetings in the last week of January. They will continue to meet to see where we can improve and have a harassment-free workplace. The committee has already begun and has established online harassment-free workplace resources available to the public, and so on. We filled a number of workshops with staff on harassment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Your final supplementary, Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his response. It is good to hear that development is happening in this very important area.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the position of the ethics officer has been established under the *Public Service Act*. I recognize that the collective agreements between the government and its unions prescribe various grievance and dispute resolution processes. However, I continue to hear concerns about the need for better processes to address interpersonal conflict and allegations of bullying in the workplace

where all parties in the dispute have confidence that the process is fair and unbiased. Can the minister describe how this new Workplace Wellness Division will address this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that through proper training and understanding the different kinds of harassment and what constitutes harassment, bullying, and what is just being told to do your job is key to going forward with that and identifying the problems and issues that may be in a department or in a workplace and going forward, educating the supervisors and staff both as to what steps are needed in order for your issues to be brought forward to stop the harassment issues or to deal with the harassment issues.

Mr. Speaker, I think this committee and our department has been working very hard to identify these issues and put on workshops and training. We have trained over 1,000 staff in government already on workplace harassment issues. Bringing that out; an ability for people to communicate and discuss these issues, I think is a very healthy first step to bring things out and to be able to communicate and deal with the matter, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Oral Questions. Member for Aggu, Member Quassa.

Question 786 – 5(2): Affordable Housing on Inuit-owned Land

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me once

again. Again, I will direct my question to the hot seat, to the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

First I would like to say I hope that the minister is listening very closely as I want to get a response to my question. There are times where we ask questions and we don't get a response at all, which is not ideal.

It indicates in the (interpretation ends) business plan (interpretation) that the minister had a meeting with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. I'll read what is written in the business plan. (interpretation ends) "Status: The Nunavut Housing Corporation has met with Qikiqtani Inuit Association on several occasions to discuss affordable housing for Inuit on Inuit Owned Land. However, further engagement will be necessary..." (interpretation) When we read documents and information, we believe their content. We have to work together in order alleviate some of the problems and concerns, and you can't do it alone. When we try to work alone, there are challenges.

Mr. Speaker, my first question to the minister is: when are you going to have a meeting with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, and not only the Qikiqtani Inuit Association but also the regional Inuit organizations, rather than just waiting for them to approach you? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Netser

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Personally I have not met with the

Inuit organizations. Mr. Speaker, I said last year and I say it again: we need help from the Inuit organizations in terms of addressing housing issues for our beneficiaries. The land claims agreement, our member from across the House negotiated himself. It is unfortunate that the housing file was not included in the land claims agreement, the very person that negotiated this agreement that we have. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Member Quassa

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for telling me exactly what his thoughts are. My question was: when are you going to be meeting with the regional Inuit organizations? As I indicated to the minister earlier, just waiting for somebody to approach you doesn't work. I am sure the minister well knows you can't just wait for them. It doesn't work at times. He should take the initiative and approach them so that he can have meetings with the regional Inuit organizations. Once again I would like to ask the minister: are you going to have meetings with the regional Inuit organizations and will that take place? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I will reach out to our Inuit organizations and ask them for assistance in how we can address this critical housing need that is before us. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your second and final supplementary question, Member Quassa.

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I didn't get a response, but I will just proceed. I am sure that the regional Inuit organizations are waiting for the minister to take the first step. The regional Inuit organizations did not even get a phone call or an invitation. They are just waiting for the minister to take the initiative. He has legs and he can probably walk there as their offices are close by. Can the minister indicate here in the House and for the benefit of Nunavummiut if he will take the initiative and approach and work with the regional Inuit organizations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister Netser.

Hon. Patterk Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) This House is no place for personal insults. I've got legs, I can walk, and I will reach out to the Inuit organizations and request a meeting with them. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members, please note that the time for question period has expired. Continuing on with the orders of the day. Written Questions. Member Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to go back to Item 5. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): The member is seeking unanimous consent to go back to

Item 5 in the *Orders of the Day*. Are there any nays? There are no nays. We will go back to Item 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Member Qirngnuq.

Revert to Item 5: Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank my colleagues. I would like to recognize visitors in the gallery who are from my community. Margaret Nirlungayuk, please stand so that you will be recognized.

>>Applause

Maureen Subgut.

>>Applause

Christine Immingark.

>>Applause

I am very pleased to see them here. They are teachers in my community of Kugaaruk and are here to attend meetings. When I was working for the Co-op in the 1990s, they used to be my employees and I am very pleased that they have become instructors. I am very happy they are here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Please feel welcome in the gallery as you observe the members in session and as Nunavut beneficiaries. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Member for Gjoa Haven, Member Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rarely have time to recognize people in the gallery, but I do have a constituent from Gjoa Haven that is a teacher also and attending meetings here. Her name is Catherine Eleehetook. Welcome to the Assembly.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Please feel welcome in the gallery as the members are in session and always feel welcome in the Legislative Assembly as Nunavut beneficiaries. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Premier of Nunavut, Premier Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rarely get to recognize visitors in the gallery. At this time I would like to recognize my wife, Susan Savikataaq, and my two grandchildren, Annabella Savikataaq and Steele Savikataaq. If they can stand up, please, but they're too short.

>>Laughter

They're over there, if they can be seen on TV. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Please feel welcome in the gallery. It's good to see his smiling grandchildren in the Legislative Assembly. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. There are none. Going back to the orders of the day. Written Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Member Lightstone.

Item 7: Written Questions

**Written Question 059 – 5(2): Iqaluit
Public Housing Stock**

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation and the subject is Iqaluit public housing stock.

Mr. Speaker, during the recent fall sitting, the Nunavut Housing Corporation's public housing construction allocation methodology came under scrutinization. It is appreciated that the Nunavut Housing Corporation ensures this process is objective and transparent and provides the details to the committee, and has begun the practice of tabling that information for the benefit of the public.

This document states that the formula is adjusted for planned construction, but does not mention an adjustment for units which are uninhabitable. With the rising number of fire damaged and/or boarded up units, I am curious if these are taken into consideration when determining the existing stock used in the formula. Therefore I would like to request detailed information on the Nunavut Housing Corporation's public housing portfolio in Iqaluit to determine what the current public housing stock is compared to the community's relative need.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are detailed and I request that they be entered into the *Hansard* as read.

2019

1. As of March 31, 2019, how many public housing units were maintained in Iqaluit?

2. As of March 31, 2019, how many of Iqaluit's public housing units were occupied?
3. As of March 31, 2019, how many of Iqaluit's public housing units were vacant and
 - a. Ready for occupancy;
 - b. Required minor renovations, and estimated date of completion;
 - c. Required minor renovations, and estimated date of completion; and
 - d. Unsalvageable, and estimated date of teardown

2018

4. As of March 31, 2018, how many public housing units were maintained in Iqaluit?
5. As of March 31, 2018, how many of Iqaluit's public housing units were occupied?
6. As of March 31, 2018, how many of Iqaluit's public housing units were vacant and
 - a. Ready for occupancy;
 - b. Required minor renovations;
 - c. Required minor renovations; and
 - d. Unsalvageable

2017

7. As of March 31, 2017, how many public housing units were maintained in Iqaluit?
8. As of March 31, 2017, how many of Iqaluit's public housing units were occupied?
9. As of March 31, 2017, how many of Iqaluit's public housing units were

vacant and

- a. Ready for occupancy;
- b. Required minor renovations;
- c. Required minor renovations; and
- d. Unsalvageable

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Do members agree that Mr. Lightstone's written question be entered into the record as read?

Some Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Thank you. There is agreement. Continuing on. Returns to Written Questions. Continuing on. Replies to Opening Address. Item 10. Replies to Budget Address. Item 11. Petitions. Item 12. Responses to Petitions. Mr. Clerk.

Item 12: Responses to Petitions

Response to Petition 006 – 5(2): Andy Aulatjut Elders Centre Operations

Clerk (Mr. Quirke): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am filing the Response to Petition No. 6 – 5(2), tabled in the legislature by the Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove. Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you. Item 13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. Item 14. Tabling of Documents. (interpretation) Minister of Family Services, Minister Sheutiapik.

Item 14: Tabling of Documents

Tabled Document 249 – 5(2): Schedule for the Student Loan Fund March 31, 2018

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik

(interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I am pleased to table the schedule for the Student Loan Fund for the year ending March 31, 2018. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you very much. Tabling of Documents.

Tabled Document 250 – 5(2): 2020-2023 Business Plan of the Office of the Legislative Assembly

Tabled Document 251 – 5(2): 2020-2023 Business Plan of the Chief Electoral Officer of Nunavut

Tabled Document 252 – 5(2): 2020-2023 Business Plan of the Office of the Languages Commissioner

Tabled Document 253 – 5(2): 2020-2023 Business Plan of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth

Thank you, members. I have four documents to table today. The first document is the 2020-23 *Business Plan of the Office of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut*; the second document is the 2020-23 *Business Plan of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Nunavut*; the third document is the 2020-23 *Business Plan of the Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut*; the fourth document is the 2020-23 *Business Plan of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth*. (interpretation) Thank you.

Tabling of Documents. Continuing on. Item 15. Notices of Motions. Item 16. Notices of Motions for First Reading of

Bills. Item 17. Motions. Item 18. First Reading of Bills, Hon. Minister of Finance, Minister Hickes.

Item 17: First Reading of Bills

Bill 40 – Supplementary Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, No. 3, 2019-2020 – First Reading

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Arviat South that Bill 40, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 3, 2019-2020*, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The motion is in order. To the motion. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried.

First Reading of Bills. Hon. Minister of Finance, Minister Hickes.

Bill 42 – An Act to Amend the Cannabis Act – First Reading

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member of Arviat South, that Bill 42, *An Act to Amend the Cannabis Act*, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried.

First Reading of Bills. The Hon. Minister of Justice, Minister Ehaloak.

Bill 41 – An Act to Amend the Guardianship and Trusteeship Act – First Reading

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa, that Bill 41, *An Act to Amend the Guardianship and Trusteeship Act*, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The motion is in order. To the motion. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried.

Item 19. Second Reading of Bills. The Hon. Minister of Finance, Minister Hickes.

Item 18: Second Reading of Bills

Bill 40 – Supplementary Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, No. 3, 2019-2020 – Second Reading

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Arviat South, that Bill 40, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance Act) Act, No. 3, 2019-2020*, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill makes supplementary appropriations to defray the operations and maintenance expenses of the Government of Nunavut for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. (interpretation) Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I feel like I need to say a few words on yet

another supplementary appropriation. As we know, this has become an annual event and despite changes or movements in terms of the budgeting process, we continue to see these supplementary appropriation bills. I hope that at some point in the future we will not see them because the budgeting process within the government, which involves regular members such as myself, will be strengthened to the point where the budget will be sufficient to cover all the government's expenses for the upcoming fiscal year.

I do support this bill and I do know that it is needed, but I just wanted to voice my concern with this annual exercise, which I believe just showcases the need for further improvements to the budgeting review and approval process in the future. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Thank you. The motion is in order. The principle of the bill. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried and Bill 40 is referred to the Committee of the Whole.

Second Reading of Bills. The Hon. Minister of Justice, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa, that Bill 41, *An Act to Amend the Guardianship and Trusteeship Act*, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the *Guardianship and Trusteeship Act* by removing references to specific...

Speaker: Order. Hon. minister, you have to seek consent prior to second reading of your bill. Hon. Minister of Justice, Minister Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't know I was doing something wrong, but I move to seek consent, seconded by the Hon. Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa, that Bill 41, *An Act to Amend the...*

Speaker: The motion is out of order. The minister has to seek consent for second reading of the bill.

Second Reading of Bills. Hon. Minister of Finance, Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to deal with my motion today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The minister is seeking consent to deal with his bill today. Do members agree?

Some Members: Agreed.

Speaker: There is agreement. Please proceed, Minister Hickes.

Bill 42 – An Act to Amend the Cannabis Act – Second Reading

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Arviat South, that Bill 42, *An Act to Amend the Cannabis Act*, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker and members, this bill amends the *Cannabis Act* to provide for the registration of suppliers and

licensing of cannabis retail locations and to clarify provisions related to corporations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried and Bill 42 is now referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation.

Continuing on. Item 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Bills 39 and 40 with Mr. Rumbolt in the Chair.

An Hon. Member: A point of order.

Speaker: To the point of order. What's your point of order? Minister Kusugak.

Point of Order

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that there was a hand up still for the second reading of bills, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: To the point of order. We will go back to Item 19. Second Reading of Bills.

To the point of order, we will go back to Item 19. Second Reading of Bills. Hon. Minister of Justice, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I seek unanimous consent for second reading of bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. I had already made a ruling on the second reading of your particular bill and I made a ruling that it was out of order. You will have to deal

with your bill on Monday.

Second Reading of Bills. I see no more hands. Item 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Bill 39 and Bill 40 with Mr. Rumbolt in the Chair.

In accordance with the authority provided to me by Motion 62 – 5(2), this House stands... .

Before we proceed with the Committee of the Whole, we will break for lunch and report back at 2:00 p.m.

(interpretation) Sergeant-at-Arms.

>> *House recessed at 12:30 and Committee resumed at 14:00*

Item 19: Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

Chairman (Mr. Rumbolt): Good afternoon, members. I would like to call the committee meeting to order. In Committee of the Whole we have the following item to deal with: Bill 39. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good day. (interpretation ends) We wish to continue with the review of Bill 39 and the 2020-21 Main Estimates for the Department of Health. If time permits, we will then proceed with the review of the Department of Community and Government Services. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Are we in agreement that we first deal with

Bill 39?

Some Members: Agreed.

Bill 39 – Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, 2020-2021 – Health – Consideration in Committee

Chairman: Thank you. I would like to ask Minister Hickeys: do you have officials that you would like to appear before the committee? Minister Hickeys.

Hon. George Hickeys: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, please. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Does the committee agree to let the minister's officials go to the witness table?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could please escort the witnesses in.

Thank you. For the record, Minister Hickeys, if you could please reintroduce your witnesses. Minister Hickeys.

Hon. George Hickeys: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To your left, Deputy Minister Ruby Brown, and to your right, Greg Babstock, Executive Director of Corporate Services. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. When we left off yesterday, we were on page H-5, Public Health for the Department of Health, and the total operations and maintenance budget was \$24,563,000. The next name on my list was Ms. Nakashuk. Please go ahead.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Yesterday when we were discussing about the preventative or promotional practices with the Department of Health, I wanted to ask more about the community health representatives that are based in all the communities. I'm guessing all the communities have CHRs. I'm curious to find out how active they are in the schools. My first question. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickeys.

Hon. George Hickeys: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Really, it's case and community specific. If there's a focused area or a part of the community wellness plan that's in focus, then there would be communications with community wellness coordinators and the DEA to see if there's any opportunity to go in and work on education aspects. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickeys. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I was quite impressed and had a good read the other day in the newsletters about a CHR up in Clyde River who is quite active with visiting homes and new moms, and talking about healthy lifestyles. I would like to talk about that. I don't often see that and I think it's very important that CHRs be active in those communities.

I see that there is lots of stuff that need to be forwarded in terms of educating our youth about smoking. It was in the

news too that about over 70 percent of Nunavummiut smoke, and marijuana being legalized now, and we all know it has been practised for many years, but the effects of it for the youth are also very dangerous when they're not fully grown. I'm curious to know how well they practise in terms of safety training to youth.

I'm talking about different topics, I guess, and those being few and also the effects of drinking and so on. I know you mentioned a bit yesterday stating that health staff can't really do all of that, but CHRs have a very big role in the communities in terms of promoting and working with community members. I wanted to ask what their roles are in terms of how active they are in the community. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to answer the question in a couple of stages here, with the chairman's indulgence.

When we talk about the training for the community health coordinators, it has been identified that the consistency of the training needs to be more ramped up and we started that fairly recently. In fact, last year we had a major training component here in Iqaluit where we had 18 community wellness coordinators, a regional wellness program coordinator, and 3 community health development coordinators brought in to work on different workshops like strengthening the skills around their roles, community engagement, program planning and management, budgeting, proposal writing, monitoring, and evaluation.

There is also regular support provided to the community wellness coordinators through site visits and regional teleconferences that are held as well.

We do plan on holding another workshop this year looking at assessing other training opportunities. Just to get a little bit more specific in the cannabis health promotion department, there has been a number of different training workshops on educational social media posts, there has been content developed to assist in the messaging, there has been a mass media campaign started last April and continued into May with literature review and research to fill in some of the knowledge gaps in cannabis use patterns. There is substance use themed trivia game that has been developed by the TB health protection team on substance use program. Those are just some of the initiatives related specifically to cannabis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) I'm going to ask my last question. It has nothing to do with CHRs but is in terms of clinical support in the health centres. I'm curious to find out if there are any plans or any discussions about doing what they call a 'triage' in the communities. I might be wrong in terms of that word, but when we go to a hospital here there is a nurse that checks blood pressure, and so on. I was just curious as sometimes patients want second opinions at times, and I just wanted to ask if there are any discussions about doing checks like that when they get into the health centre for patients that are to be seen. (interpretation) Thank you.

(interpretation ends) That's my last question.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickeys.

Hon. George Hickeys: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a little bit of a difficult question to answer. It's more case specific. Triage is a general clinical practice; whenever people present themselves to a health centre or a hospital setting, the initial glance, I guess if you want to call it that is to do an assessment on what the anticipated need is and how urgent it is. That is one of the components that they use to evaluate who needs to be seen faster than others. If somebody comes in with a sore throat, they are likely to be seen after somebody coming in with an open wound or severe pain.

With regard to second opinions, those are always an option for people when they have questions, whether it be about the diagnosis or the treatment. If it can't be made available immediately within the health centre, I do encourage people to contact the Office of Patient Relations or the local health centre staff first, obviously, to see if a scheduled appointment can be made to get another opinion from another health care provider.

We want to make sure that people are comfortable with their care. I have said it here many times where, as clients or as individuals, we know our bodies and if there is something that we feel isn't being addressed, we want to make sure that when you walk out those doors, that you feel comfortable in the recommendations and the care that has been offered. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickeys. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. Welcome to day 3 of our budget deliberations. I have quite a few questions under public health, but one that I have raised over the last two years is the issue of public health or environment officers and their inspection reports, and publicly disclosing the information that they find. Would you be able to provide us with a status update on that initiative? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickeys.

Hon. George Hickeys: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am just looking for the right note on it.

Thank you. I know this has been talked about. There are a number of different reports that do come out when we look at some of the things. The data we collect is communicable, chronic disease, congenital conditions, surveillance data, and population statistics, but specifically what the member is looking for with regard to the environmental health officer reports being available online; we are working with... . When we look at our *Public Health Act* that we're bringing forward, those are the types of initiatives that through the consultation, I am hoping, will narrow the focus of what types of reporting expectations there are for the public sector.

We want to make sure that people are comfortable with the process of the inspections as they go, whether it be food service facilities or government-run

operational buildings. We want to make sure obviously that they are safe to work and to conduct business in. Right now, realistically on that topic specifically, we are kind of waiting to see how these consultations are going to roll out.

There are obviously some challenges with the way the inspections are being done now. The majority of them are being handwritten notes. To make that into a more of a streamlined process would take some investments in technology to be able to provide fairly immediate, relevant information to be able to be posted online. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickee. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have seen some of the handwritten reports that the minister has just spoken of. They can be at times difficult to read. I can't imagine how the individual or the supervisor of that inspector is expected to review the notes, let alone the owners of the establishments that are being inspected. To date, are inspections still being done with handwritten material or are inspectors currently doing electronically written reports? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickee.

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. They are still handwritten. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I might have put forward this recommendation last year. Nonetheless, I will do it again. I would like to recommend that the minister give direction to the department to ensure that going forward, all environmental inspection reports are written up electronically, not just for ease of reference, but for historical purposes. It might need to be referenced at a later date and it would most likely be impossible to do with handwritten notes. I would like to put forward that recommendation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickee.

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the comment and we have been looking at it. It's a little bit more complex when you're in a small community when you're doing your inspections and you're visiting a number of different facilities in a short period of time to get everything done. Again, it's something we have and will continue to explore. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickee. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Going back again to last year, the minister and I had had some discussions on this topic and the situation in Ontario where anyone that goes into a restaurant can walk past the entrance where they will see their inspection report publicly disclosed, and I think they have three different categories depending on how successful their inspection was.

My next question is: when can Nunavummiut have that same assurance when they walk into a restaurant or a food establishment and be able to see the quality of the results of that establishment's inspection reports? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just going to go back to his previous question; I was just updated. As these things are very fluid, we are continually working on projects. I have been informed just a few seconds ago that we actually have made quite a bit of progress on the electronic submission of those filing. They're not in place as of yet, but we are looking in this fiscal year to implement an electronic system.

With regard to the expectation of having each... whatever type of business like restaurants or that type of thing where those scores... I have seen many different models in many different jurisdictions on how those are public within the business itself. I don't have a timeline for that and again, I would strongly recommend that the topic come up as we're doing the consultations for our *Public Health Act*. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll move on to my next topic. Ms. Nakashuk had touched upon rates of tobacco use in the territory and my next line of questioning is going to be in relation to the tobacco reduction budget.

In response to my written question, that line item had lapsed \$1.5 million, or 50 percent, of their budget in '18-19 and looking at historical actuals, that tobacco reduction budget or expense has been steadily declining over the last four years.

I would like to ask the minister if he would be able to provide us a little bit of information as to why tobacco reduction has seen a reduction in actual expenses while we're seeing our tobacco uses remaining extremely high, if not gradually increasing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know the exact details on the whole division, but typically when we have been lapsing money, it's due to vacancies in positions. As we're filling positions, those monies are being utilized. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the minister if he would be able to tell us a bit more about the current staffing level within the tobacco reduction division. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are nine PYs in that division right now; four of them are indeterminate, two, I believe, I think are casual and three are vacant.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes, you wanted to add a little more? Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My apologies, I was looking at another line, but the numbers I quoted are correct. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that information. I hope that the department will be able to ensure that those positions will be staffed before this time next year.

Looking at the budget for that line item, which is roughly \$3 million. Is that going to remain the same in 2021, and do we expect that to be fully utilized in that fiscal year? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the funding is consistent in that line item. We are looking at maintaining that.

With regard to the full expenditure, that is the goal. When we establish these budgets and we are working with the work plan of what type of objectives that division is entailed with; that is the money is given to do it.

Like I have mentioned, one of the challenges that we have had with not just this division, but other divisions, typically when there is money not being fully utilized, it is for staff travel,

training opportunities in the communities, community educational workshops those types of things that do vary. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Quassa.

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome again minister, and your officials.

I will be speaking in English. I really wanted to ask this question if it has not been asked yet. (interpretation ends) The new *Public Health Act* came into force this January 2020, just last month. What new activities will be initiated as a result of the new legislation and regulations? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Quassa. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I covered it a little bit in my minister's statement the other day, but some of the coming into force we are looking at... . Sorry, I am getting a buzz back from my earpiece.

We want to make sure that the legislation on communicable diseases, health hazards, food safety, safe water, and other health promotion activities are looked at. Therefore when we work with our chief public health officer and other EHOs, we want to make sure that they have guidelines.

Some of the things that they look at that have been updated are access to records regulations. There is the Baffin Iron Mine Corporation Exemption Order, *Barber Shops and Beauty Salons*

*Regulations, Camp Sanitation
Regulations, Eating or Drinking Places
Regulations, General Sanitation
Regulations, Hospital Standards
Regulations, meat inspection,
ophthalmia neonatorum, and I am not
even sure that is.*

>> *Laughter*

I have enough trouble with English sometimes, never mind Inuktitut.

...Public Pool Regulations, Public Sewage System Regulations, Public Water Supply Regulations, Tourist Accommodation Regulations, Health Regulations. In addition to that, education communication and implementation has been rolled out and it has continued to be rolled out to staff across the territory. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickers. Mr. Quassa.

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Just on that food inspection thing, in our communities, well, at our community stores we do encounter some fruits that are mouldy and they're sitting on the display, and we do see that quite a bit at times and it just makes me wonder. Maybe you can answer or I'm sure the health safety inspectors do their job, but how often do they inspect these facilities where they sell food, fruits, and do you do that in every community?
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Quassa. Minister Hickers.

Hon. George Hickers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have to rely on my memory on this one. If I recall correctly, obviously the intention is to go into every community every year at least once depending upon the size of the community and the diversity of businesses in there. Sometimes it's two or three times. Iqaluit obviously has access to the offices. As a larger centre, there are more frequent visitations here.

That being said, and I know other members have brought different circumstances to my attention, anytime there's a concern, obviously, please bring it to my attention and we can take a look at working with the business involved, if there are concerns. There may be historical inspection data that we can go back to the businesses with and help them make sure that they're following the rules and regulations.

I will say that for the vast majority, businesses are very compliant. They realize that our health inspection officers are in there to do a job for public safety and, like I said, most businesses are very compliant. They recognize the need to follow those rules, but again, depending upon the community, once or twice a year is pretty basic. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickers. I do believe the inspector was in Sanikiluaq just last week and did that community. Mr. Quassa.

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I'll talk about public health now and I'm sure you are aware of this, but Inuit have had traditional medical remedies from time immemorial and listening to CBC sometimes, they talk a lot about medical

remedies that are not on the shelves or the usual medication, for example...I don't know what they're called, puffy mushrooms. I don't know what they're called. (interpretation) What are they? (interpretation ends) Puff balls are an example. You see them everywhere in Nunavut, well, pretty well everywhere in Nunavut. They used to use those for deep cuts and so forth. These are traditional medical remedies.

Has the department ever did studies or worked with traditional knowledge holders on these? This is ideal. I mean, Nunavut, like anywhere else in Canada, I guess, but they have traditional medical remedies. Has Health ever thought of doing research or working with traditional knowledge holders on these? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Quassa. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question. I recall now it was about four or five years ago the question was posed to me by an outside agency, I can't remember even where they were from, enquiring about just that. I suggested to them at the time to work with the Nunavut Research Institute to look at maybe getting some type of a grant or something to take a look at holistic remedies or traditional remedies.

One of the concerns that were raised at that time is there's a lot of uncertainty around interactions of the traditional remedies with modern medicine. If a doctor is prescribing something, we don't always know what the impact would be to have that traditional remedy

brought into the picture as well too, but it's something that I know had been brought up a little bit.

One of the things that we did participate in is with midwifery, where that book was produced on the land for midwives, I remember buying my daughter a copy of it, where those traditional customs and practices were brought in. That's an example of how it could work. I do agree with the member. It is not something that we would likely expend resources on. We wouldn't have the information or the technology to be able to do that, but when we look at addictions and counselling, the on-the-land programs, mental health and land-based programing, the traditional "knowledges" are integrated within that curriculum that is being taught, with a lot of it in Clyde River.

I appreciate the topic and I think it is a good idea and I hope somebody out there is listening and is willing to bring their expertise to the table to take a look at some of those solutions. Thank you for the question.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Quassa.

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is very interesting and it would be nice to have research done on this. In our Inuit homeland we have a lot of medicinal traditional use and we also believe in Inuit societal values as a government. Incorporating that and incorporating our belief system, it would be fascinating to push that and it is food for thought.

I would like to move on. (interpretation ends) The grants and contributions

sections of the department's main draft estimates include \$250,000 to be allocated to community-based Health Committees of Council. Significant funding has been provided to communities under the Nunavut Wellness Agreement. What kinds of community-based activities are supported with this funding? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Quassa. I do believe that question was posed yesterday and the minister stated that each community got \$10,000 each. Minister Hickee.

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do have a list and it is literally pages long of the different programming that gets put out. The Chairman is correct. The \$250,000 is a base to assist the Health Committees of Council to put forward submissions and proposals for other initiatives. There have been many different sewing groups, on-the-land programming, young men's groups that have been provided funding, and unfortunately I don't have the full list here right now, but if we look at the school food programs, the community wellness plans that all communities have now completed, I could get the members an actual detailed list per community of what types of activities have been going on and I can provide that at a later date to the committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickee. Mr. Quassa.

Mr. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I had asked a question earlier about Inuit traditional knowledge with regard to traditional medicine and I

think it could be incorporated under that funding. If the criteria could include traditional medicinal uses, if people wanted to conduct research in this area, I think it would be a great way to incorporate the elders and their knowledge and participation through this particular grant funding. I am just throwing that out there as an idea.

(interpretation ends) The Department of Health works with the federal government and Nunavut Tunngavik on the Northern Wellness Contribution Agreement. How do the programs and initiatives funded through this agreement integrate with community wellness plans in Nunavut communities?

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Quassa. Minister Hickee.

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Basically in a nutshell, one of the key basis of the community wellness plans and strategies that communities come up with to target different initiatives that are relevant to that community's needs, and that is one of the things that I have been talking about for a number of years here and I think we have all come to realize over the course of Nunavut's history that what works in one community does not necessarily work in another community. Although we have a lot of shared interests and a lot of shared challenges, there is also that individualization that these funding pots allow, the flexibility. It's not us telling the community what they need to do. It's the community telling us what they need and then we're hopefully able to provide it through these funds. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. We are on page H-5. Public Health. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$24,563,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Moving on to page H-6. Health Care Service Delivery. Total Operations and Maintenance budget to be Voted. \$387, 980,000. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good day, minister and your officials.

(interpretation ends) This is the largest component of the department's budget, so I anticipate that there will be a number of questions on this.

Just looking at the budget, looking at your business plan between pages 152 and 154, there have been a number of increases. Medical transportation is up. Mental health and addictions is up. I want to zero in on hospital and physician services, which is up by \$9 million, proposed. Basically my first question is: what is that \$9 million going to be going towards? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question from the member. A portion of it, a little over \$2.3 million is, as I talked about in the last couple of days, the compensation and benefits adjustment that we've had to make, but the bulk of it is specifically for physician services contracts, almost \$6.3 million of it. Those are contracts

not just for the physicians here, but those are the physicians that go to the community visits.

One of the things that we have been finding, and I'm sure every member here can attest to, is that the demands are increasing, increasing, increasing. Like I mentioned a few times, health care doesn't have the luxury, and I don't want to belittle any trade or profession, but it's not like somebody is sitting there waiting to pay for an invoice, where if it misses a day or two, it's not the end of the world. With health care professionals we are obviously dealing with people's lives and community wellness.

We have been basically forced to increase some of the physician visits and physician service days as they continue to increase in the communities, where we haven't had the funds to provide to those elevated services, which has forced us to come back, as the member made in his statement earlier today, one aspect of health that has been chronically underfunded for years where we continue to have to come back to the Assembly for supplementary appropriations, and I'm not saying this is going to eliminate it, but it will help deal with some of those forced increases in the service days. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As for physician services, which we call *isuaqsaijiit* in Arviat, how many physicians are there and where are they located? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just looking for the details on it, if the committee can bear with me for a moment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a good thing that I looked because I had a number in my head and I was off by two. At least I have accurate numbers in front of me.

The total budgeted positions that we have right now are 32.5 PYs. Currently staffed positions as needed are 44.5. The demand on the physician services has been exceeding what we have budgeted under this line. It is not an option to not send doctors into a community. I hate using that word "forced growth" or not controllable, uncontrollable expenses, because the only way we could control them is to limit the number of visits to the communities. As far as I am concerned, that is not an option.

To deal specifically with the member's questions, I am going to use the currently staffed positions, not the approved PYs. In Qikiqtaaluk there are 24; Kivalliq, 9; and Kitikmeot, 4. For anaesthetist specialists here in Iqaluit, 2; general surgeon, 1.5, here in Iqaluit; and the paediatric unit of 4 here in Iqaluit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister. You had said there are 44.5. Which communities are being served or where are they located? As you know, there are not that many nurses like in Pond Inlet, for example. There are no doctors that live in Pond Inlet, for example.

(interpretation ends) Does the minister have information available or could you explain where the 44 positions live in the territory? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a mix. We have doctors that are permanent residents of Nunavut, whether it be here in Iqaluit, in Rankin Inlet, or in Cambridge Bay. All doctors across the territory are under contract. There are doctors that come up for periods of time or locum rotations. We use the doctors from here at the QGH and we use doctors under contract from the south to service the communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) That is one of those Iqaluit-specific terms we hear a lot, "the communities." Well, we will take care of this and then we will go to the communities. We are all communities. We have 25 communities. Iqaluit is a community. Anyway it's just a comment.

Are there any physician positions that are assigned to community health centres? I will use Arviat as an example. Last I checked, it was through a written question, there was not a physician PY. The position was not assigned to the community. Are there any communities other than Cambridge Bay, Rankin Inlet, and Iqaluit that have physician PYs associated with them? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, but there are communities in the territory that are receiving equivalent of full-time practising days in the community that would be actually equivalent to full time. Each community does have physicians that are assigned to it or physicians have different communities that are assigned to them. I don't have a full breakdown of how many physicians it takes to be assigned to a community or to a number of communities, but that is the model that we work under. Thank you

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) The minister's answer was no and so I am going to ask why not. It exists based on feedback from the physicians themselves. If they said, for example, "I do not want to live in Arviat, Arviat is not a good enough community for me to live in," is there a reason why the physician positions are only located in regional centres? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Quite a few of our physician contracts are not all year long, full time like we would normally describe in an office setting.

There is variability to the number of physicians going into a community. I will use Arviat as a hypothetical

example. There may be three physicians that are servicing that community over different periods of the year where the service days... . As an example, last year, where we look at 251 days that there were physicians in the community, when you are talking from weekends and everything, that is equivalent to a full-time physician being in their community. It is just broken up into different packages. There may be a week or two where there is not a physician in the community and then there is.

Again, using Arviat as an example, 251 days of practising days, there has been a physician there pretty much full time. Whether they are living in the community taking up a unit or bringing their families in, those are always things that we are trying to promote. I think that when we are looking at service days of something like that, I would be open and I am sure the department will be open to if a physician wanted to reside there. When we are looking at that amount of service days, they could always go to other communities from there, so I would be open to it. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) I am glad to hear that the minister of the department would be open to something like that, but the question is: why haven't they gone and pursued that as opposed to, just to continue the example, who is going to go and look for the physician who wants to live in my home community? Is it me as an MLA? I think that would be going beyond my job as an MLA if I go out

and start looking for doctors and “Do you want to move to my community because the Minister of Health told me that he would be open to it or the department might be open to it?” I am just trying to understand why this has not been made part of the business plan.

If we could maybe have an explanation or whether the department has any plans to proactively try to see situations like that. It is not just about Arviat; it is any community. You take two communities together, you could have a physician living in community X, who is assigned to community X and Y, and they travel between community X and Y, and that is where they live, in community X.

I think what we need to go toward is doctors or professionals who actually live in the community and know the family history, know the medical history of their patients. That is where we need to go eventually. (interpretation) Have you ever considered something like this? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are continual recruitment efforts for physicians obviously for across the territory. It is not always just Iqaluit. Just to back up a step, I do appreciate your comment earlier. When I talk about Iqaluit, I am talking about the Qikiqtani General Hospital, is what I am talking about. That is the only hospital in the territory.

I will jump back into the response. One of the things that we are always looking in our recruitment process is opportunities for doctors that come on

short-term contracts. We work with our NunaFam program, as an example of Memorial, where doctors do come up as part of their learning clinical. We’ve had a number of doctors out of that program that have moved to Nunavut or have continued to return.

I’m not sitting here making excuses. As a matter of fact, next month we have our chief of staff going into Arviat and Baker Lake to look at the physician capacity in there. We are always trying to find efficiencies and bring consistency of care. I have talked about this numerous times. When you have any turnover where you have to go over your issues again and again and again, information that you can’t get from a patient chart, it is challenging. I know that. We all know that.

It is a competitive market. I think we are very generous with our physician contracts and we’ve had a lot of success, even more so in the last couple of years, on recruitment of physicians due to the need. We keep increasing the service days for the physicians. I can’t remember the last one I looked at. In the last 15 years it was almost triple the physician days, if I recall correctly from the chart. I’ll have to substantiate that again with the actual notes, but our physician days are increasing dramatically every year and there has been a lot of growth in the last 15 years especially.

I am actually quite proud of our physician recruitment staff that are going out to different hospitals and doctors and colleges and inviting people up to check it out and they come up here for a while and people fall in love and they move here. The word of mouth and the

treatment that we give our physicians and health care staff, I can't emphasize enough how obvious it is that health care professionals speak to one another. We have communities that people truly want to go to every time they come to Nunavut and then we have communities where we have to really work to get people to go into them.

I'm going to take a chance to put a plug out there for all of our residents to get to know your health care professionals as best you can. I know it is very difficult when they are there for short periods of time, but invite them into the community and make them feel welcome, and that is the biggest recruitment tool right there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. I want to apologize to Mr. Main. I didn't stop the clock when he finished his last question, so I will give him the opportunity to ask a few more questions if he wishes. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I will just exchange that for additional rounds of questions later on, if possible, Mr. Chairman.

Just before I move off of this topic of physicians, I wonder if the minister could commit to providing the numbers that he quoted, 44.5 current staff, and then the breakdown in written form at a later date. I think it would assist the committee perhaps in future fiscal years with their review. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can, but I do have to caution that it is a very fluid number. It can change on a weekly basis, so I'm not sure how much of a long-term value it would be. Maybe what I will do is I will have a conversation with the member outside the Assembly and we can work together to figure out a format that would be acceptable to him. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Keyootak.

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question on behalf of patients. We all know that the airline scheduling to the communities has caused a lot of problems, and because of course the owners of the airline are trying to make a profit, the people who use those services are not asked for their opinion.

The routes and the hours have increased dramatically and some of the patients that are using the airline services are on respirators and are quite sick. Usually they're given those tiny respirators that don't have a lot of air in them because there are none that are bigger.

For example, if an airline has to reroute because of weather conditions and because some of the patients are now concerned about running out of air in their respirators, is it possible to have additional respirators on the airplane? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Keyootak. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Whenever somebody is

travelling with oxygen, it is considered a dangerous good on the airplane, so it has to be arranged with the airline, with the medical travel staff, and coordinated with the health centre to make sure that there is the oxygen on the plane for the patient.

Typically what would happen in a case where a plane had to divert for weather or whatever reason and go to another community, there would be contact with the health centre there to utilize any of the stock that they would have available. I really don't want people to worry. They would be able to get oxygen from the health centre from whatever community they're in. That's one of the contingencies that are put into place.

One of the other concerns that have come to light, maybe to pre-empt the member's next question, is when people are travelling with oxygen or with mobility issues, sometimes these days are long and it's something that if somebody was really concerned over the length of their travel day, to put in a request to the department to maybe have like a layover day here in Iqaluit or in one of the regional centres where available. It's obviously a very case-by-case circumstance and most people want to get home as fast as possible, but we do realize that some of the travel distances across the territory are long.

I will take the opportunity as well with regard to the airlines, in a lot of respects it has streamlined the process, especially here in this region with the staggered flights going now. Most people can make it back to their home community in the same day. That has brought a lot of efficiency into the medical travel process. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Keyootak.

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you. Another concern that was brought up by the patients is in the Baffin region we usually end up in Ottawa for medical services and some of them are sent to Winnipeg or Montreal, but the majority go to Ottawa if you're from the Baffin region. From the Baffin, we also go to the Qikiqtani General Hospital here in Iqaluit and they're provided the services that are required.

If the boarding home is full, they're given taxi vouchers in Iqaluit. They're given taxi vouchers if there are no drivers available, but there are patients outside of Iqaluit, especially in Ottawa, that are evicted or banned from the boarding home, especially the patients or escorts that were intoxicated. They're just banned and thrown out to the street and that is a concern. Some have no money at all. They're not even given taxi vouchers. Is it possible to look into this matter? If patients are banned or if evicted from the boarding home, they can't even go to the airport to catch their flight.

I know that the taxis operate differently in the south from up here. They probably know how much it would cost to go from the boarding home to the airport. People should be able to be provided a taxi fare to go to the airport so they can return home. Has this been considered by your department, the issue of providing taxi vouchers to patients or escorts who are banned from the boarding home? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to here in Iqaluit, anytime that somebody gets a taxi voucher, it is not provided through the Department of Health. That is done through the boarding home through their contract.

When we're looking at people that are banned from boarding home facilities, taxis can be arranged for them through medical travel whereas they don't have to pay for it. It's paid for by the department as well as hotels and restaurants. When you are asked to leave the premises of the boarding home, you're not thrown out on the street; you're brought to a hotel or in some cases, if absolutely necessary, to any alternative accommodations that can be arranged.

I think this brings a point to the larger issue is why people are getting banned. When they arrange their medical travel there are forms that they go through and there's signing off on the patient and the medical escort. To me, you have obligations. We're sitting here looking at approving a budget for medical travel in huge numbers, like \$100 million, huge. When people are not appreciating the fact that we're able to provide medical services for them outside the territory or even inside the territory, they have obligations as well. Those obligations are known, where it's very clear that you can't drink.

You don't get banned from a boarding home for one instance or very rarely. It would have to be a very severe encounter. There's a verbal warning, a written warning before they take the step

to ban somebody. I'm being held accountable to my budget and I think our patients need to be held accountable as well for the services that we are providing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Keyootak.

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for explaining that very clearly. In the communities we know that the number of medical travel patients just keeps increasing in number and that it's just going to keep increasing as the population grows.

Some communities and the other community that I represent have real concerns about the lack of health committees. They asked me to come over, complaining about their medical travel and the other community I represent, the airport is very far away from the community. Those people who have to go for medical travel, not all of them have their own transportation. Some of them are poor. They just cannot get anybody to take them to the airport. I know that in some communities, hamlets provide that service.

Can the Department of Health work with the local municipalities and the hamlet's service people? Can they work more closely with them? There are so many medical travel patients that don't have their own means of transportation and the hamlets are usually the ones that do the servicing. Some communities don't have taxis.

To provide better services for medical travel patients, can the Department of Health work closely with the hamlets

when a community is very far from the airport to help individuals in getting to the airport? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are always open to discussions with hamlets and municipalities and mayor and council. We are always open to hearing concerns brought forward. There are a couple of different venues or avenues, obviously. They can write me a letter formally or if it is a patient-specific experience, they can contact the Office of Patient Relations which will deal with that individual's circumstances.

With regard to airport transportation, some communities do have arrangements made with the Department of Health. A lot of it is through the Non-Insured Health Benefits, which uses a criterion of the distance from the community to the airport where it qualifies for additional travel. It is something I can speak to my officials about and maybe get a little bit more information. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Before I move on to the next person on my list for questions, we will take a 15-minute break. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 15:06 and resumed at 15:26

Chairman: Good afternoon. I would like to call the committee meeting back to order. Before break, we were on page H-6. Health Care Service Delivery. The next person on my list to ask questions: Ms. Kamingoak.

Ms. Kamingoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, minister and your officials.

The Mental Health and Addictions Division of the Health Care Service Delivery Branch will see an increase of over \$5 million in the 2020-21 fiscal year. What new mental health and addictions programs and services will be provided and how will they be delivered? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A small part of that increase is kind of the common theme of the compensation and benefits adjustment. The bulk of it, a little over \$5 million of it, is for out-of-territory mental health and addictions treatment. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Kamingoak.

Ms. Kamingoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 147 of the business plan I see that on part of the status of the third bullet, your Department of Health is working with partners such as NTI and Indigenous Services Canada to fund an in-territory addictions and trauma treatment centre in Nunavut and increase capacity for on-the-land programming. Can you elaborate on the increase of capacity for on-the-land programming in Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Kamingoak. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, so we talked about this quite a bit this year when we were looking at the models of mental health

and addiction care. In-community is obviously the most preferred. When we look at addictions counselling and addictions treatment, there are different levels of need. Residential is obviously the most extreme. Day programming or on-the-land camps or programs is another method to complement the mental health care in that regard.

Using the success that has been accomplished in Cambridge Bay with the society there that has been running on-the-land programs for a few years now, we have taken best practices of other societies in the Kivalliq and here in the Qikiqtaaluk. I have communicated that with the organization in Cambridge Bay, sharing best practices on how to envelope or accelerate the programming in the other regions.

There has been money spent last year. Most of that was from the capital side of things of building the camps or purchasing the snowmobiles or the transportation equipment, and we're expected to serve approximately a hundred people per year throughout the regions.

The model is still being formally developed in the Kivalliq, as well as here in the Qikiqtaaluk, but Cambridge Bay is already running. From what I understand, I believe the Kivalliq program is very near operational. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickey. Ms. Kamingoak.

Ms. Kamingoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your response. I hope to see more of these on-the land programming happening outside of

Cambridge Bay, Iqaluit, or Rankin Inlet; in the smaller communities.

Mental health services are in high demand across Nunavut. How is the department working with Nunavut Arctic College to recruit and train Nunavummiut into the mental health field? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Kamingoak. Minister Hickey.

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would have to get the specific information, but I know we have worked with Nunavut Arctic College on a number of different components, not just in mental health.

Like we were talking about yesterday of our mental health workers, what we have done is breaking it down into three levels or three categories of a mental health worker. It gives people the opportunity to get their foot in the door within that profession and look at furthering their own academic opportunities or their own experience where they can move up the ladder and get into higher and higher level roles.

I do not have the information at my fingertips right now on the exact programming at Arctic College with regard to mental health. I will have to get back to the member on that one. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickey. Ms. Kamingoak.

Ms. Kamingoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the minister. In 2018 the government announced long-term plans for addressing mental health

wellness in Nunavut. Part of that plan includes the development of an Inuit workforce to help deliver treatment and healing services. What progress has been achieved to date in recruiting, training, and hiring Inuit to provide services and support in these areas of addiction and trauma treatment? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Kamingoak. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In addition to the mental health worker program that I just spoke about, which are all local hires, we've got our mental health paraprofessional program as well, of which we have hired 15 people and 12 of those are indeterminate; youth program facilitators, different outreach workers, again, in addition to the mental health worker program that I spoke about a little bit earlier.

I feel that we are making some very good progress in that regard. Like I said earlier, one of the core components of any health care provision is having that consistent level of staffing and the people in the communities are the core of that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Kamingoak.

Ms. Kamingoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister. One of your department's priorities since 2017 has been to develop and deliver a colorectal cancer screening program. When will the results of this initiative be published? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know there has been a lot of work that has been put into colorectal cancer screening, but just to provide the level of detail, this is more operational. With the chairman's permission, I would like the deputy minister to respond to that one.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Brown, please go ahead.

Ms. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the colorectal screening program, there has been considerable work going on in the background to develop the forms, the education, and the training required so that patients coming into the community health centres will be screened in a standardized way. There is a service follow-up process that is being set up as well. We are hoping to roll it out within this fiscal year and it's just about ready to go. We just need to make sure that it has a strong foundation of staff education, and also service follow-up is in place for those who are screened to have a positive diagnosis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Brown. Ms. Kamingoak.

Ms. Kamingoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that response. Is the department considering offering new cancer screening programs in the future and, if so, what types of cancers will be focused on? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a number of different initiatives that we're starting

work on, like we just spoke about the colorectal cancer. We are also working with cervical cancer; we are revising the screening guidelines. The majority of that has been completed and distributed to frontline staff, so all community health nurses are capable of completing the testing for that.

Breast cancer is a little bit more of a challenge to have; we can't have mammography machines in every community. It's not realistic or feasible. One of the questions that I had when I toured the QGH here recently and saw the equipment there, I could see how large and how delicate it is, so it is a little bit more of a challenge there, where we will assist people in arranging mammogram exams either through existing health travel, medical travel, or travelling on their own. If you're going down for a holiday or for work business, if you wish, we can have somebody arrange the appointment to coincide with that time.

We are also looking at some prostate and lung cancer screenings, which are obviously a little bit more challenging; especially with the false positives or false negatives that come out of some of the basic testing for that. We are looking at that more down the road, but we're doing some preliminary work on that. I hope that the member's question.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickee. Ms. Kamingoak.

Ms. Kamingoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister as well. Moving on, the Office of Patient Relations plays an important role in addressing complaints and concerns regarding medical services provided to

Nunavummiut. I wanted to know: what are the most common types of issues dealt with by this office? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickee.

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Basically, as I am sure it's no surprise to anyone here, escorts are the main issue that is brought forward. After that, it would be care or treatment concerns that are brought forward. I can say with all my heart how much I appreciate that office and what they do. They are dealing with people that are going through an emotional topic and they deal with it so professionally. They get back to everyone.

My office utilizes that office, I'm going to say, almost daily with the amount of bring forwards that my office does. We have some fantastic staff in there. I can't give them enough accolades. The work that they are doing makes all of our lives easier. I know anytime any of you have brought constituent issues forward, Patient Relations has dealt with it in a very timely manner.

That being said, people are not always getting the answer that they want, but at least they get an explanation on why. I am going to take this opportunity to really thank them publicly. When we're looking at the tracking itself, we are tracking the numbers and the reasons and the communities, and we share those with our clinical services to see if there are any adjustments or anything we can do to help mitigate those concerns. A key component of our health care delivery, I think, is the patient relations office. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question will be for funding for the Long-term Care Division. Rankin Inlet does send out kidney dialysis to Winnipeg. I would like to know how many Nunavut has that is getting kidney dialysis treatment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Towtongie. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you. I would have to confirm. Again, I don't have that level of detail right in front of me. It's either four or five. One of them, I think, might be down for transplant purposes, but for dialysis, I believe it's either four or five. I'll have to confirm with the member after. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The reason why I ask that question is I have been approached a number of times by kidney dialysis patients from Rankin Inlet, there were two, and they were wondering why the treatment can't be carried out in Nunavut, in Rankin Inlet or Iqaluit, but within Nunavut. I would like to know what the cost would be for that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Towtongie. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question and it's something that I think people really need to know the information of how

challenging it would be to provide dialysis services here in the territory. We're talking right off the bat approximately \$3 million in capital to bring the equipment and establish a room to do the dialysis and in addition to that, close to a million dollars a year in O&M. Like I said, we have four or five patients that would be utilizing those services and even they would have to be here. They would be in the territory, but if they're not from here, they're still going to be transplanted.

That being said, one of the main concerns, not just the money side of things, is that there are not enough patients here first for a technician to maintain their licensing requirements in that field where they need to see so many people a year to maintain their licence requirements. We wouldn't be able to provide enough volume for them to maintain their licensing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that question. It has been ongoing like "Why not have it in Nunavut?" The other question, I want to know when these long-term patients travel outside of Nunavut, First Nations receive adequate funding for per diems, but for a long-term patient, they receive \$24 a day. That's for breakfast, lunch, and supper and the second escort receives \$12 a day. I did check out on these and I would like to know... . Inuit live in one of the most expensive parts of Canada. Why are the rates different for long-term patients from First Nations? That's my final question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Towntongie. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It would depend on the contract with the jurisdiction through Non-Insured Health Benefits of what they would cover and how they would cover it. The reason it does go down after an extended period of time is people are typically then living on their own. They're not in a hotel or at the boarding home. They're in either an apartment or someplace where they have a kitchen where they can cook for themselves.

If you're talking a patient and an escort, if you're looking at \$36 a day or let's say \$35 a day for round numbers, you're looking at over \$200 a week for groceries that they can spend on and they're not living in the north for this amount of funding. These are people living in the south, so the cost of living is a lot cheaper. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The first question I would like to ask, (interpretation ends) as the minister stated, for people that are going out for treatment, I am curious to know what the budget is, or how much money is spent on people going out of the territory to get that kind of support? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you. Can I just ask for a quick clarification? Is it

just mental health and addictions, or just addictions treatment? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Nakashuk, if you could clarify your question please.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I was asking about the treatment for addictions. I am curious to know how many usually leave the territory, and how much is spent annually to get families or people out to get that kind of support? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not have that level of detail with me, but the out of territory mental health and addiction care, I believe it is around \$25 million, and this is like a \$5 million increase to that because we have typically gone over that line budget. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk: Thank you. When you put that together, is \$25 million of that more for mental health support or is half of that used for treatment or addictions? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My apologies. I would just like to correct myself from an earlier response. Our anticipated forecast is \$25 million; our budget is only \$15.7 million for this fiscal. That is one of the reasons

why we are asking for an increase. From January 2019 to December 2019 there were 93 clients receiving out-of-territory care. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) 93 out of territory. Does that mean those are families or are those single people? Is there a breakdown? I know there have been families that went to a treatment facility, let's say, in BC. I am just curious to know how the breakdown is on that and where the treatment facilities outside of Nunavut are that they have contracts with. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickee.

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not have the number. There are a number of different facilities that we have standing offer agreements with, but the number of contracts or placements was 113. Sorry, I do have it. There are 31 facilities that we have contracted right now. Up to this current year, it isn't over yet, we have already had 113 contract placements. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickee. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Ms. Kamingoak touched a bit about it too in terms of the community level support, I guess, mental health support and addictions. I guess addictions would kind of fall into that as well.

When we are talking about a treatment facility being planned for Iqaluit, or the city, and people would be coming here for that, I am curious to know what plans are in place in terms of community support. Are they planning to hire employees to run programs or will they do local contracting to get people out on the land? What works are in place for that kind of program? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The majority of it is proposal based. There is funding. That's where we are identifying funding that can be used for those types of services. We already do have staff in each community with the mental health and addictions staff.

Again, when I go back to that different ladder of the position itself to have the positions in the community when you're talking about specific programming like an on-the-land camp or something like that, those would be a proposal-based effort. Again, it just goes into the fact that, as a number of us know, when a community gets engaged and involved and works on developing a program, there's a lot more success to it because that level of engagement and buy-in is high. If we were to go into a community and say "Here's a couple machines and a couple tents, go develop an on-the-land program," we're not going to get a lot of success. When it's planned out properly, the outcomes are a lot better.

Like the member mentioned, with the addictions and trauma facility here in

Iqaluit, we're looking to offset a lot of those out-of-territory travels because we would be able to provide the majority of those services in-territory then.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) The minister states that there are supports for communities in terms of proposal-based funding to whoever is applying, but I think we are talking about mental health.

I think we're in the phase or the time where there are so many children being left behind by parents and the kind of trauma that they go through, with the high suicide rate, there's not even a mental health worker for youth and children who are really in pain and need to get more support.

I'm curious to know from the minister: are there any immediate plans or does the minister feel we are in crisis to provide more mental health support for children and youth in our territory? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do agree with the member that there is an identified need. One of the ways we're building that capacity is that we are doing a lot of work with the Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto, with telepsychiatry services. Also, when staff is available within the community, mental health and addictions outreach workers do provide support to schools

and other areas within the community where youth are present. It is a focus of that division.

With that being said, I'm going to say that in the last three or four years, it has become more and more recognized that of the mental health services that are available and the increasing need, we have been developing capacity over the last few years and we are still continuing to do so. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I think it's very important that the government just concentrates on the youth because, like I had mentioned, we are in that time where our youth need more support, and just in the recent years there was no diagnosis of PTSD or bipolar. These are things that people are dealing with, like anxiety. Maybe it's just me that seems to kind of hear more of that today than we did before and the youth, I think, suffer the most. I think it is something that the department needs to look into further.

To top it off, when we are talking about boarding homes and families staying for a long term, whether they are cancer patients or not, there is no mental health support in the boarding homes, whether it be Iqaluit or Ottawa. I don't know about the other regions. I know in Larga Baffin there was a social worker that worked there but is no longer there. That was a big support for people that were there for long term. Are there any plans in place to have mental health workers in those kinds of facilities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wouldn't say there is a plan in place, but there are discussions that are occurring more and more on what types of services could be provided in the boarding homes from all levels of health care to a certain degree.

That being said, obviously I can't go into a lot of things that we are potentially looking at because I don't want to set any unrealistic expectations, but with that in mind though, there is the availability of options now. If somebody was at the boarding home here in Iqaluit, as an example, and we do have our mental health services available here in Iqaluit that would be able to assist anyone going through anything that way.

Failing that, there are also the people at Larga. I was down in Ottawa a couple of weeks ago and I met with some representatives from TI where they have helped Larga provide counselling services or social guidance. The services are there. Maybe they are not in an office down the hall, but if people do want to talk to somebody, we will make sure that they do get to talk to somebody. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I think it is great to hear that there is support, but I also know the mental health workers are understaffed and overworked as well. That is why I was asking if there are any plans for those facilities.

Another question I wanted to ask was in terms of the transportation under medical travel. As you mentioned, Patient Relations get most calls about escorts. Are there any pamphlets or anything in the communities that people can access to just read about policies and procedures regarding escorts? I know that there is an appeals process for patients if they are declined escorts, but the reason I ask is another constituent had asked about following her husband. They are both unilingual. The wife was denied as an escort because she doesn't speak English.

I'm curious to know: for policies like that, are there changes happening or is the policy finally being followed up in terms of having an English-speaking escort on medical travel? I'm curious to know: are there any pamphlets for communities to review? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not aware of any pamphlets in the health centres. I know the information is on our website, but the main aspect of that education would happen when they sign their travel documents at the health centre. The conditions are always explained to them, or they are supposed to be.

I think, during your question, you asked about the implementation of the policy. I think that is one of the areas where we have actually, again, started to take positive strides. Our Medical Travel Division has worked out more training and more consistent implementation of it. In addition, the approval of escorts is

not at the community level as much as it used to be, where there could be pressure or perceived favouritism and that type of thing. There is a lot of pressure on our travel coordinators in the health centres because people think that they are the ones that are controlling the approval or not. There are steps that go through where the clinical analysis is being done.

The example that you provided where a unilingual elder escorting another unilingual elder, that should never happen. I know people who would want to travel with their spouse or their family, but at the end of the day the provision of health care is the priority for that trip and we need to make sure that the full understanding is available of what types of medical supports that need to be given, how to change dressings or provide medications. That is the purpose of the trip. That's where we have to rely upon the patient to inform their family of their needs and we have to take a serious look.

I'm sitting here again defending a medical travel budget that we go over every year, yet I still constantly get calls and emails of "Why can't this person come down with me? Why can't that person come down with me? Why can't I have two escorts?" We have policies in place and we are, through training and development within that division, doing a lot more positive work on informing the staff of what to set the expectations, but also informing the public of the responsibility of being an escort. It is not a travel partner. You are there to fulfil a role with the health care delivery for your family or friend that you are travelling with. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickers.

Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand the frustration and I understand the issues that we see, but I think it's a matter of educating the community of what policies are in place because some communities will be allowed to have different practices of escorting patients and another community has a different way of doing it.

I think, if we want to educate the community, it has to come down to providing the right information provided by the department on policies and procedures in terms of medical travel. It goes the same way in terms of boarding homes, what to expect when you are staying in a boarding home and transportation. I know you guys have a huge department, but when we are looking at our communities, they are tiny. I think it is just a matter of communicating the appropriate information to the community. I think it's a valid reason why you shouldn't have to go through patient relations on a daily basis if these documents are available at the community level. That is just my point.

I think it is very important that the department starts doing surveys on transportation, boarding homes, and medical travel. Is there anything like that in place to do surveys just so the department has accurate data on what needs to be corrected? Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickers.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree with almost everything the member said.

One of the things and I was just informed that there are brochures. There are actually five different brochures that are available in the health centres in addition to posters. There are brochures on infant travel, escort travel, necessary identification to travel, and brochures on appeals as well. There is a general brochure on the policy which outlines the eligibility responsibilities of medical travel.

As well, there are public service announcements that have been going out over the last period. There was a client survey done about a year and a half ago, I'm going to say, here in this region and that's what led to some of the feedback into some of the amendments that we have made to the medical travel.

I appreciate the comment that the member made that there is a perception that medical travel is administered differently in different communities. That's again the main focus of these training workshops that we're providing to our medical travel coordinators so that consistency is there, so that the application of the policy is more consistent.

I do acknowledge the member's concerns and we are taking steps to address them. Like anything, it doesn't happen overnight when you're talking about an educational shift in something that might have been done differently in the past. When we start adhering to these policies, it obviously brings up some concerns and things like that, but I think we're on the right path.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I think my last question will be, one thing I have heard over and over is expectant moms staying in a boarding home and the issue I have heard numerous times is being moved constantly to a different room or a different floor or going to a hotel and coming back to the boarding home because their stay in a hotel is... .

There are deadlines, of course, but I'm curious: are there any plans to ensure that these expectant moms are staying in one place until they are ready to have the baby or if there's any consideration that elders might be put in a place where it's quieter or cancer patients are in a more peaceful area or something like that?

I know boarding homes are very busy and the changeover of patients and escorts is never ending, but that's another concern that has been brought forward to me in regard to having a good place for elders or expectant moms. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for bringing that to my attention a little while back. It did help. It opened up some discussions and it came in conversations with one of our contractors that I met with a couple of weeks ago on having to move people around and it is challenging.

The boarding homes are very busy places, there are a lot of people moving around, and they're contracted to provide accommodations and meals.

Now, the challenge there is if there's room in the boarding home one day and not the next, then people are in hotels and then if there's room at the boarding home the next day or the next week, then they want them to go back to the boarding home because that's where they keep control of their own financial stability as well too.

It's not a simple solution, but of the things, through the discussions that I've had with my staff, I know when we talked about it when you brought it to our attention, was to try to figure out a way to provide at least some sense of stability so you don't have to move so frequently. I appreciate the member bringing that to our attention and we're aware of it and we're working on trying to find solutions to the issue. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickey. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My first questions are going to be in relation to the written correspondence from the minister. I would like to thank you for providing the details regarding mental health positions and facilities, although it is missing the most crucial aspect of my request and that was an issue that I have been raising for the last two years and it's the lack of Inuit staff specifically at Akausisarvik. I have raised this concern; this is going to be my third year in a row bringing this issue up, considering that the composition of the clientele there are Inuit and many of them are coming from

communities and are unilingual or English is not their first language, and it makes it very difficult for them speaking with non-Inuit staff.

I appreciate the minister may not have this detailed information on hand, and I always appreciate to receive information at a later date, but I would like to inquire, of the 21 positions at Akausisarvik, how many are currently filled by Inuit employees? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickey.

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The member is very correct. I do not have that level of detail with me. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickey. Mr. Lightstone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Would the minister be able to provide that information at a later date? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickey.

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, but I will ask for a little clarification from the member. When we look at staffing at Akausisarvik, there are a number of relief employees as well. Did he want the entire staff compliment or the indeterminate PY filled ones, or casual PY positions? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickey. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the employees, I'm assuming, are most frequently on hand, I

would prefer to see the information with the indeterminate and casuals, but if you would like to provide the details of the relief staff, that would be appreciated as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will pull that information together and provide it. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My next question is in relation to a written question that was submitted by Mr. Mikkungwak back in March 2018 about the staffing status of the Department of Health. At that time in 2018 there was a total of 35 positions filled by contract.

The minister had indicated that there were a number of physician contracts, but would you be able to provide us with an update? As of today, how many positions are being filled by contract? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I don't have that level of detail with me here today. We can look into it. I do know there have been some improvements in that aspect of there being less, but I don't have the numbers. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Looking at this written response, there were 35 contract employees in 2018; 34 were physicians and 1 was a nurse. Just to know today if there are any other positions being contracted out other than physicians. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: My sincere apologies, Mr. Chairman. I missed the end of the question. Sorry.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone, if you could repeat your question, please.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you. Gladly. In the written question it states that 34 of the contracts were for physicians and one was for a nurse. I understand across Canada it is general practice to have doctors or physicians on contract, but not typically nurses, so I was a bit surprised to see a nursing position contracted out.

I was asking: as of today, does the Department of Health have any other positions contracted out other than physicians? Are there any nurses or any other positions being contracted out? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Like I said, I will have to get back to the member on if there is any other contracted position other than the physicians, but I do know for a fact that that one nurse position that the member is talking to is no longer a contracted position. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for that response. I'll move on to my next line of questioning and it is in relation to transient housing. In the response to my written question, it is noted that the department has continuously gone over budget with transient housing. The most recent figure the department spent almost \$1.5 million on transient housing; \$700,000 over the \$650,000 budget. Why is it that the department has continuously gone over budget with transient housing? Yes, that is my first question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have said a few times here in the last few days that health is a little bit of a different beast.

When we look at some of the critical positions that we have in our health centres that we have advertised or whether they are not filled indeterminately, where we can provide staff housing through the application process, there are times where we have to bring in a health care professional to provide a service, we need to put them somewhere. We are going over on that just due to the demand and the need to have those specialized or critical positions filled with somebody.

The only way to stay within that budget that I see right now is to not provide that service. That is not an option for me. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My next question: what is the budget for transient housing in 2021? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. \$654,000. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The department has continuously gone over this \$650,000 budget for all the years that the department has provided me information. Why is it that the department has not increased this line item? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The main reason is just that we just do not have the money to increase the budget. We are trying to stay within the perimeters of what we are budgeting for. In a perfect scenario where these critical positions are filled indeterminately, we would not have that expense. It is just due to providing the coverage in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will move on to my line of next questioning and it is in relation to

the professional practice. This is an area that has seen significant lapses every year. Last year in 2018-19, the most recent information that I have, this line item lapsed 50 percent of its budget. The budget had remained constant or was that \$979,000 that time and had been for a few years, I believe, and it had chronic lapses in this area. That is an area that the department easily could have transferred or reallocated some of its budget.

I guess my question is: considering professional practice has continually lapsed significant amounts in the budget, why is the budget remaining constant at \$997,000? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickey.

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have the level of detail on that today to see exactly what some of the holdbacks are on not meeting the expected budget. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll move on to my next question and it is in relation to the Igloolik continuing centre. This is one item that I have identified as being continually underfunded. The budget has remained constant at \$2.2 million while the actual expenditures for this facility have been roughly \$3 million and most recently \$3.5 million. Why is Igloolik continually underfunded or why is it continually going over its budget? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickey.

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is one of the reasons why we are adding approximately \$2 million to the budget line, not specifically for that facility but for continuing care this year. I believe there was 800-some-odd thousand dollars that was put into that line last year to recognize the increasing costs.

As far as to exact examples on that facility on what is leading to that, in general most of our challenges are staffing to make sure that the level of care is being provided. Mr. Chairman, when we're going back over written questions that were done a year or two ago, it is very difficult for me to be able to answer on the spot with the level of detail that some of the members are requesting. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickey. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll move on to my next line of questioning. Once again it is going to be quite detailed. My question is about the budgets allocated to each health centre. From what I see, almost every health centre has gone over budget every single year. There are either two issues here, that the health centres aren't being provided with an adequate budget to provide their services or there is something going on in those health care facilities that are causing it to have irregular expenditures. I would like to ask: what exactly is going on with the health centres? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickey.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The majority of it is as we continually talk about here is staffing capacity in the health centres where we don't have indeterminate staff in there. We have to explore other and usually more expensive methods of providing the positions in the health centre.

As well, there could be spikes, if you have like Cambridge Bay is going through right now where there is a stomach virus going through the community. That is going to put a lot of strain on the resources and it is obviously going to have an impact on the fiscal outcome of that.

There are many variables on what the challenges are, but I do acknowledge that we are not budgeting enough because we don't have enough money. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister indicated that it is likely due to staffing issues and the need to fill them. Am I to understand that health centres are typically over budget due to reliance on agency nurses? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, that would be one of the factors. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to build upon what my colleague, Mr. Main, has been

addressing for quite some time. It is the staffing issues at these health centres which lead to continual emergency only situations. It is obvious that almost every health centre has staffing issues. My question to the minister is: how will that be addressed in 2020-21? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Basically, like what we have been doing, we have been very aggressively recruiting last fiscal year up into this fiscal year. There have been over 200 nurses hired indeterminately. There is some success. I am not calling it a silver lining but maybe a bronze lining in there that our recruitment methods are quite aggressive and are working.

That being said, it is a continual challenge to keep people here for longer terms. With short-term needs or holiday relief or different seasonal challenges as well, it creates a lot of pressure on the health recruitment system. I talked about it a little bit earlier about one of the biggest recruitment tools we have in our arsenal is other health care professionals talking to other health care professionals, and unfortunately in some of communities people don't want to work there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For my last question: in recent years, has the department's reliance on agency or casual nurses seen an increase or a decrease in trend? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Just off the top of our heads, it's approximately the same, but I would have to go back and actually look at the numbers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. If I could jump in with a quick question, with regard to your recruitment issues for nursing, is there a general shortage across Canada or is it just that people don't want to come to Nunavut?
Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is more than a national urgency. It's internationally. Nurses are short all over the place, especially when you look at current circumstances with the coronavirus, how much strain it's putting on health care systems.

To be frank, it's more lucrative for a lot of our nurses to come and go. That's where some of things we need to work on are that we need to make sure that we are treating our indeterminate staff better so that they want to sign that contract or sign that job offer to stay here on a longer term basis. We are getting more aggressive with job share opportunities. We really need to take a look at how our whole model is.

When we look at the staffing within a health care facility, you look at some other jurisdictions right now that are dealing with nursing shortages; they are reducing services in their facilities. We are not doing that. If anything, we are increasing the services in our communities. Those are the stresses that it puts on the staffing side of things. We are working on different models of

staffing requirements within a health centre on what it could and should look like. It is a work in progress right now.

Some things I have been pushing for over a year now and there are some limitations to what we can do right now because NEU negotiations are still ongoing. There are some changes we can't make and other things we can do with like reporting or aligning responsibilities with different divisions a little bit better.

Overall, nursing is a very sought after profession right now. That is why I am really hopeful that more and more people apply to our own program that we have here in the territory. If we are really going to make a dent in some of our longer term needs, we are going to need more Nunavummiut to continue providing care here in the territory.
Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes for that explanation. Next on my list: Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If someone has already asked the questions I would like to attempt to ask, the Chairman can inform me if they have already been responded to. Mr. Chairman, that is up to you.

The first question I would like to try to ask is about people who are referred to as (interpretation ends) mental health workers. (interpretation) I don't know what they're called in Inuktitut, unfortunately. Also, TB workers go to the communities for a very short period of time and then they change and new workers come in to replace them. They

seem to get replaced right away.

Does the Government of Nunavut have a policy where the nurses or caregivers can only stay in one community for a certain number of days and then they have to move on to another community? Does the Department of Health have a policy like that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Qamaniq. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, we don't. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In many communities in Nunavut there are emergencies that happen. People are supposed to help when there is someone dealing with heavy mental health issues who need help. When people are experiencing difficulties, is there a system set up in the communities? I can repeat my question in English if he doesn't understand it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for the question. I think it is an important one to help enforce that we do have processes in place. If someone is in a real crisis moment, I would strongly recommend calling the RCMP first. The safety of the person is the first priority. We wouldn't want anyone to hurt themselves or anyone else, but there are mental health workers in communities that can be brought in to assist. If there is not

someone in the community, then we will provide those services outside of the community if necessary.

The biggest thing that I continue to try to enforce is to ask for help. That is the biggest thing we need. There is nothing wrong; it doesn't make you weaker and it doesn't make you less masculine or less feminine to ask for help. We will do our best to provide the services, but people have to ask for them. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I will speak in English. (interpretation ends) A number of Nunavut communities have suffered from traumatic incidents which affect the whole community. What kinds of mental health services are available to communities to address the fallout after a major incident? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is something that has been brought up a few times and we have made some real progress on. When we look at a crisis event, as the member described, there is a real bad thing that happened in a community and the services that are in that community are incapable of dealing with all the volume, we have mobile trauma units that we can send in to assist the local mental health staff to deal with the volume and to work with the families.

There have been numerous communities that these mobile trauma units have been sent out to over the last while. Probably

the most challenging part of it is the aftercare. When there is an influx of an issue and there is a bunch of people in town that are trying to help out with it, and one of the core components of that is that our Inuit-trained counsellor so that they are speaking to people in their own language, who are better trained from a very extensive counselling program that is run out of Clyde River.

At the end of the day I think it does come back to asking for the help. Typically I will get a request from a hamlet or the council itself to provide services or to let us know that there has been a number of extreme things happening back to back that they are concerned about. We will work with our Quality of Life Division to bring in a team of people to assist. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickey. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In 2018 the government announced a long-term plan for addressing mental wellness in Nunavut. Part of that plan included the development of Inuit workforce to help deliver treatment and healing services. What progress has been achieved to date in recruiting, training, and having Inuit to provide services and support in the areas of addiction and trauma treatment? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickey.

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for the question. When we're talking about building an addictions and trauma facility here or elder care facilities, the staffing component really needs to be well

thought out and planned out. I answered a question on this the other day on how important it is for these counsellors to be Nunavummiut with the clinical and the traditional knowledge that can be brought to the table to really assist people better that are going through that process. We are working with Nunavut Arctic College to develop the program that is going to be needed for the staff here, working in conjunction with the counsellors from the Iisiasivik in Clyde River, how important it is to build that capacity. We are working on that right now still. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickey. Mr. Kaerner. Sorry, Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sometimes we make mistakes. I do not mind at all that you made a mistake. We all make mistakes.

I would like to ask about what the member for Niaqunnguut touched on, which is a long-term plan. Your 2020-23 business plan mentions elder care. It is pointed out in your business plan, and the one in Rankin Inlet has been approved for elder care. I will speak in English. (interpretation ends) What specific initiatives are being considered for the upcoming fiscal year to address this issue? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickey.

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Rankin Inlet facility was phase 1 of our infrastructure plan. Phase 2 is to have a facility in the Kitikmeot and then a facility here in Iqaluit to provide the higher level care. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the minister for the response. There are different levels of care, levels 1 to 5, and levels 4 and 5 require 24-hour care and people with dementia. The lower levels, levels 1 to 2 or 3, require less care. I would like you to really consider the North Baffin, perhaps at least a 10-bed care facility for the lower levels of care. I would like you to seriously consider that when you're doing those plans and it's still not in the plan. I would like you to seriously consider if you can approve that.

Mr. Chairman, that's it for now. After the response, I will have two more questions, if it's possible. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Using our existing facilities, so we do have a facility in Igloolik that looks after the North Baffin side of things, where right now we're focusing on, like we talked about quite a bit extensively in the fall, of making sure that we're building facilities that are large enough to provide the level of care that's needed.

With regard to lower level care, we have existing facilities in Igloolik, Gjoa Haven, and Cambridge Bay, there's a facility in Arviat, and another one here in Iqaluit where we need to focus on and this is an overarching need. When we know we need beds for elder care, we have to do it in a way that we're able to provide that level of care that's needed

and to do that, these seven-bed, eight-bed, ten-bed facilities are too inefficient.

The model that is being used right now is based on a house. I explained it a little bit in the fall, but I'll touch on it. It's based on 12-bed increments. Once you get off that, if you go to 15 beds or 10 beds, you're losing efficiencies from staffing and the infrastructure. We need to make informed decisions on how we move forward and I appreciate the member's lobbying to get a facility in Pond Inlet. That's not likely going to happen in the near future. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our fellow Inuit know exactly about their bodies. We all know our own bodies and what shape they're in.

A fellow resident of mine was coughing up blood from his lungs. Because there's a general hospital in Iqaluit, he came here for tests and a CT scan. After he was tested, they said that he was just fine and that there was nothing wrong with his body. They said that he was healthy.

It's good that it turned out they asked him to go to Ottawa and they were conducting tests there. They said that he had cancer in both lungs, yet here at the Qikiqtani General Hospital they said that he was doing fine.

If he was not asked to go to Ottawa, he would probably be long buried by now. It's fortunate that he was asked to go to Ottawa and they found that he had lung cancer. He is receiving treatment right

now and he will have the last treatment soon.

How about people who are aware of their own bodies and they're told they are fine? Is it possible for them to request to go to Ottawa? Even though they are told they are fine in Iqaluit, if they wanted to get further testing down south, is that possible? That's my question, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't go into the specifics on the example that the member provided, but I will say that we don't always know what tests were being done, what they were looking for in that type of circumstance.

I have said it myself many times over and over that we know our bodies. As a person, I know what I'm feeling, I know if there's something wrong with me, and you do have a right to advocate for a second opinion. How that happens, for example, I wouldn't be able to get on a plane today and go down to Ottawa and demand some kind of test or walk into an emergency room. That's on my own initiative. Well, I could do it, I guess, but that would be my own initiative.

Again, you can request second opinions or tests to be re-examined by maybe another health care professional. Those are discussions to have with your health care provider or if you don't feel comfortable doing that, then obviously the patient relations office will assist in arranging whatever, whether it be a second opinion or another eyes on an X-ray or a report, then they can assist in

arranging that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My colleague from Niaqunnguut worked very hard yesterday on the health boards. There were health boards in the past. I would like them to be reinstated if it's possible. Maybe it's something to be considered for the future by the Government of Nunavut. They had very good use. I don't know why, once Nunavut was created, they were dissolved even though they were very useful. Am I right that the person on your right worked for both of them before?

We know our constituents and they talk to us as members. A large majority of them want the health boards reinstated and they want us to bring it up in the Chamber. They wish the health boards were brought back. Can the Government of Nunavut consider whether they can be reinstated in the future? Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's my last question.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know I touched on it a fair bit yesterday and as well as Deputy Minister Brown responded from an experience standpoint of working with health authorities in the other jurisdictions. It is something that we have looked at and one of the proposals that were brought back was to start building that capacity with an advisory board. That's something that I'm open to examining, but there hasn't been any costing or any formalized work on that

as it stopped a few years ago.

The main thing when we talk about whether it be a health board or a school board or different boards that occurred in the past, the way of doing business has changed in a lot of factors. The relationships that we have with other jurisdictions are more complex, where a health board would be able to provide community guidance. With the capacity level that we're dealing with here in Nunavut, it would be very difficult to provide that clinical guidance. How we have these links from the community health to the QGH or to another jurisdiction can get very complicated in a lot of respects and frankly, most jurisdictions are looking at how they can get away from these health boards and health authorities from a governance standpoint.

It's something we will keep on the radar type thing, but I'm not looking at making any substantial changes right now. We have many other priorities in health care delivery right now, but it's something that, like I said, will be on our radar still. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Kaernek.

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good day, minister.

I want to switch to channel 2.
(interpretation ends) The budget for the Medical Transportation Division alone is almost \$110 million. What factors most influence the cost of medical transportation and what initiatives have been implemented to address them?

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would have to bring up the *Blues* from yesterday, but there were a number of different initiatives that I outlined very specifically yesterday, some of them mainly being the case management side of things, escort travel policies. In the case of the latest adjustment we have made to the Medical Travel Policy, it actually increased our costs because we're allowing the breastfeeding mothers to take their infants with them. To me that was an acceptable program change and an acceptable cost increase.

We have made some changes with our airline medical contract that was done recently, but the training and development of the travel coordinators in the health centres is bringing more consistency to that practice to make sure that the medical travel policies are adhered to. You know examples that were brought up earlier today. We need to make sure that our policies are adhered to, but we also have to realize that there's a human factor in certain circumstances.

It's a very tight rope to walk when you look at escorts going down and maybe them getting barred from a boarding home. Well, we've got to fly them back home and then fly another escort back down. When I talk about the efficiencies that we're trying to do internally, there's also got to be that accountability from the public sector as well too of adhering to the medical travel policies. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Kaernek.

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Indeed, when medical escorts who were banned originally have to return, it does cost additional funds and I am aware of that. The reason why I asked about this matter relates to... . How do I categorize them properly here? People with physical disabilities, as an example, in Hall Beach a constituent came to visit my office with a prosthetic leg. This person required regular medical checkups in Ottawa. When they left for their appointment, an escort was required. When he would go for his medical checkup, the doctor would just question his physical health and his prosthetic leg, and their appointment was over. He would joke that he was given a holiday by the Department of Health.

Now, in looking at the mandate of the Department of Health, is there any possibility that situations such as this example can be reconsidered, especially in light of spiralling costs and our need to be fiscally responsible by using the Internet and telehealth for these types of appointments? Could the department consider telehealth for these types of appointments to question the patient instead of sending them on medical travel?

Can telehealth be used where a doctor only needs to question their patient, and do you have plans to utilize this technology to alleviate costs, especially when a patient is sent down and goes back home a couple of days later? This is in light of the \$110 million we spend for medical travel. Will your department conduct a careful review to see how to pare down costs associated with less urgent medical treatments through the better use of telehealth?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Not only can we look into them; we are looking into them. There are a number of different factors. I mentioned I believe yesterday or it might have been the day before; those days are kind of blurring together on me a little bit already, Mr. Chairman.

One of the examples that I gave was: why does somebody need to go back down for a post-surgical consult four or six weeks after their surgery when we have surgeons here in Iqaluit who can do that? Why do we have 36 people in a community on a surgical consultation list that we're flying either down here or down to another jurisdiction? We don't. Now we're sending the surgeon into the community to do the pre-surgical consult. We have done it in a few communities now and we have seen some very positive results. Those are some of the steps that we are taking that are making a difference right away.

One of the other components is the education factor for doctors that do provide service to our residents. They don't understand the complexity of "Okay, you need to come down and see me in a couple of weeks." Why? It's not really explained to anyone why. They go back home, a couple of weeks later they go back down because they're told they have to go back down, the clinical need has been identified, but that oversight, the case management side of things is where we really are focusing a lot of our priorities right now to make sure that people are going down when they need to go down, they have an escort when

they need one or don't have one when they don't need one, to make sure that they're going down for the appointment that they're needed to be going down for.

The case management side, to me, is one of the key priorities of mitigating a lot of these challenges that are obvious. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is always going to be an issue. Also, in your line 150 that you're going to work closely with the communities about having a healthier community, *Inuusiqatsiarniq*, it's good that you're going to be providing people to the communities to bring. When will people in Hall Beach see that group, a team that arrives to Hall Beach as opposed to residents of Hall Beach leaving the community? Some people always say, "I'm only going to go to the hospital if I'm actually going to die." These are some of the comments I hear and sometimes it's a complex situation.

If you look at your budget for 2020-21, are you able to come up with a more expedient way to incorporate the idea that I have? I'll stop there for now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's one of the things that we're looking at like specialist services, as an example. If ear, nose and throat goes into a community and there are two people to see, there's not a lot of efficiency there, where maybe another

specialty, orthopaedics maybe needs to go in and there are 20 people there on a waiting list go to down. Well, that's where we're taking a look at the physician distribution to make sure that we're maximizing the impact. We're obligated to provide a minimum amount of service days or physician days, but how we allocate that is, to me, a key component on efficiencies. Those are the types of things that we're looking at to identify.

If there are two people in your community that need a certain specialist to see, it might not be efficient... Well, it won't be efficient to send that specialist up there for a day or two days to see two people, but if we identify in a community where there are 15, 20, or 30 people on a waiting list for a certain specialty, then we can take a look at bringing the specialist into that community versus bringing those 15, 20, or 25 people down. Those are the types of things that we're looking at. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For anyone in my constituency watching, I think that's good news.

I would also like to ask about a concern from my constituents for those people with disabilities. There's continuous care in Igloolik. One of the concerns that were raised for those in Igloolik, and we have a lot of empathy for those individuals there, and at the weekend, especially on Saturdays or Sundays, there are no drivers available when they want to go out and visit their family or

loved ones or friends. Are you able to recruit the Department of Health for that centre to have someone available on the weekends? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would have to look into that. This is the first time that this has been raised as a concern to me. If the member wanted to maybe start a paper trail on it and maybe write me a letter with some of the concerns that he has outlined, then I can look into them a little bit more in-depth. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Absolutely I'll write a letter. That was a concern that was raised in particular because, let's say there's a funeral on the weekend and somebody from that place wants to be going to the funeral and there's no staff there to drive them to the funeral, that's a problem. I urge your department to look into that for those elders who are in continuing care. Also, elders in Ottawa, I would like to know if there's anybody working on the weekends to look after their needs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a large facility in Ottawa. I'm not sure what resources they have on specific days. Again, maybe the member could include that in his correspondence and I can look into that in more detail. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, of course. I would like to comment further. It's not just any elder facility in Ottawa. I have a younger brother there. He has a disability. However, particularly for the elders who are there in Ottawa, their daughters, their family, they will never be seen again until they pass away. The staff in Ottawa, I was informed when I was down there on a visit that they are following the policies according to the Government of Ontario.

(interpretation ends) It's another jurisdiction for Ontario people when it comes to having Nunavut residents. Could you also look into that policy of how the Department of Health and Embassy can work together when it comes to caring for those elders down at Embassy? Would you be able to look into that and get back to me?
(interpretation) I'll end there for now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not exactly sure how to respond to that. It's something that I know has been an ongoing challenge from the facility there and I know they have been working very hard to hire especially Inuktitut-speaking staff to work with the residents that we have down there. I can follow up with him to see how they have been doing on that with regard to their hiring status, I guess, but I can't change their hiring policy because it is another jurisdiction.

For example, Article 23, I can't force

that on Ontario or any facility within there because they have their own hiring laws. I can try to twist their arm a little bit, as one of our colleagues was saying to me, but I do appreciate the comment and I do appreciate the work that that facility is doing to try to hire more Inuit staff and more Inuktitut-speaking staff, and I'll check on the status of it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Kaerner, you're done? Okay. Thank you. Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move a motion to report progress. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Akoak. There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour. Opposed. Motion carried. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could please escort the witnesses out. I will now rise to report progress to the Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Report of the Committee of the Whole. Deputy Speaker Rumbolt.

Item 20: Report of the Committee of the Whole

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 39 and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be agreed to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. There's a motion on the floor. Is there a seconder? Member Akoak. The motion is in order. To the motion. All those in

favour. Opposed. The motion is carried.

Third Reading of Bills. There are none. Continuing on. (interpretation ends) *Orders of the Day*. Mr. Clerk.

Item 22: Orders of the Day

Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *Orders of the Day* for February 24:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Replies to Budget Address
11. Petitions
12. Responses to Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motions
16. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 41

20. Consideration in Committee of
the Whole of Bills and Other
Matters

- Bill 39
- Bill 40

21. Report of the Committee of the
Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. In accordance with the authority provided to me by motion, this House stands adjourned until Monday, February 24, at 1:30 p.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House adjourned at 17:10*

