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Iqaluit

Speaker: The Honourable Paul Quassa, MLA

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

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Table of Contents

Opening Prayer.....	6059
Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters	6059
Report of the Committee of the Whole	6110
Third Reading of Bills.....	6110
Orders of the Day	6110

A.

Daily References

Friday, September 25, 2020.....6059

B.

Bills

Bill 46 – Supplementary Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2020-2021 –
 Consideration in Committee6059

Bill 46 – Supplementary Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2020-2021 –
 Third Reading6110

Iqaluit, Nunavut
Friday, September 25, 2020

Members Present:

Hon. David Akeagok, Mr. Tony Akoak, Hon. Jeannie Ehloak, Hon. George Hickes, Hon. David Joanasie, Mr. Joeline Kaernerck, Hon. Lorne Kusugak, Mr. Adam Lightstone, Mr. John Main, Ms. Margaret Nakashuk, Hon. Patterk Netser, Mr. Calvin Pedersen, Mr. David Qamaniq, Mr. Emiliano Qirngnuq, Hon. Paul Quassa, Mr. Allan Rumbolt, Hon. Joe Savikataaq, Mr. Craig Simailak, Ms. Cathy Towtongie.

>>*House commenced at 9:02*

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Paul Quassa) (interpretation): Good morning. Before we begin, I ask Mr. Qirngnuq to say the opening prayer, please.

>>*Prayer*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Today being Friday, we wish Nunavummiut well, and the people of Igloolik are in our thoughts.

Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. At this time I seek unanimous consent to proceed directly to Item 19 in the *Orders of the Day*, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. The member is seeking unanimous consent to proceed directly to Item 19. Are there any nays? There are no nays. We will proceed to Item 19. (interpretation ends) Consideration in

Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Bill 45 and Tabled Document 65 – 5(2) with Mr. Rumbolt in the Chair.

I ask that members remain at their desks so that we can immediately proceed to the Committee of the Whole.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

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

Chairman (Mr. Rumbolt): Good morning. I would like to call the committee meeting to order. In Committee of the Whole we have the following items to deal with: Bill 46 and Tabled Document 65 – 5(2). What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, colleagues. We wish to continue with the review of Bill 46. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Akoak. Are we in agreement that we first deal with Bill 46?

Some Members: Agreed.

**Bill 46 – Supplementary
Appropriation (Operations &
Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2020-
2021 –Consideration in Committee**

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

Hon. George Hickes: With the committee's permission, yes, please, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Does the committee agree to let the officials appear before you?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. For the record, Minister Hickes, if you could please introduce your witnesses. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I had to do a quick scan because I forgot somebody the other day. I'm sure everyone is familiar with Mr. Jeff Chown, the Deputy Minister of Finance; Mr. Bill MacKay, Deputy Minister of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs; Ruby Brown, Deputy Minister of Health; and Greg Babstock, Director of Corporate Services, Health. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Yesterday we were on Bill 46 and we were on page 4. Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs. Was there anybody else with questions on that particular page? Mr. Lightstone, if you could move up to this chair on the end there, please. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning.

In relation to financial assistance provided to Canadian North, yesterday the minister had indicated that the agreement between the GN and the airline had a clause in there prohibiting Canadian North from providing bonuses

to executives. I was wondering if the minister would be able to elaborate further on the details of that clause, not specifics, but I'm curious to know the length of time or the period of time in which this clause relates to. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. MacKay, through you, Mr. Chairman, would be best suited to respond to that. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Hickes. Mr. MacKay.

Mr. MacKay (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Thank you, minister. Thank you, member, for the question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The bonus and dividend term is part of the agreement. During the term of the agreement, the company isn't allowed to pay any bonuses or dividends during the term of the agreement. That's April to July. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. MacKay. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the next agreement to December 31, will that clause go beyond December 31? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know where the member is going with this. I know it's a concern of many people that have been brought to

the attention. I think the thing that we have to remember is that we are getting an independent audit of the financial records of the airline after, so we would know and they have to justify usage of every dollar that they're providing to them and any unused funds come back to us.

If they want to pay a bonus out of their own money after the terms of the agreement, that's their prerogative. We have the safeguards in place to make sure that they're not using our money to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the minister has indicated that there are assurances in place to prevent bonuses or dividend payments, but it's quite easy to find ways to work around that.

For example, profits can be held in retained earnings and paid out in future years or profits can be used to make capital purchases to reduce the amount of the bottom line, which is why I was curious if this term in the agreement on bonuses and dividends would go beyond December 31 and into the next calendar or the next fiscal year for the organization.

Can the minister expand a little bit on the assurances that he had indicated that would protect against situations such as these? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Like I mentioned yesterday, capitalization of assets is not allowed under this. There are a number of categories, but Mr. Chown is directly involved in the financial aspects of these agreements, so through you, Mr. Chairman, if Mr. Chown could respond.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Chown, please go ahead.

Mr. Chown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We in the Department of Finance shared the same concerns. There is flexibility in accounting when it comes to when you record transactions on your books. That's why within our requirements for the independent audit we specifically asked for the auditors to certify that the expenditures recorded were related to Nunavut operations and where they were allocating expenditures that could be associated with the corporate entity, the allocation methodology was reasonable and consistent with previous practice.

We also ask them to certify that the expenditures recorded in the period truly related to that period. They are checking for cut-off that they are expenses that provide a benefit in that period of time, and as the minister noted, capital expenditures have been specifically excluded so that they can't go out and purchase a new airplane, trying to bring their bottom line down.

We're never going to be able to get this perfect. If they need to have maintenance costs that need done, in theory they could accelerate a maintenance cost by a certain amount of time, but even for them they're only going to do work that needs done within their organization or it's not going to

make good business sense for them to make a bunch of expenses that they don't really need to do.

I think we have protected ourselves the best that we can through the audit and the requirements of the certification within that audit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Chown. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few other questions on this topic, but the first one will be: how will the GN ensure that any profits earned today will not be retained and utilized in the 2021 accounting period or fiscal year for that organization? That is my first question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With these agreements with the airlines, there's not a profit margin. It's a break-even point. They have to justify their revenue and expenses during the period of the contracting, during the contract period, and any unused funds have to be returned to us. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question on this specific topic will be capitalization. Capital cost allowances are heavily utilized by practically every corporation. It is a way to reduce the corporation's tax owed. It sounds like Canadian North has agreed

that there will be zero investment in their capital purchases for the duration of this agreement; April 1 to potentially December 31. Is that correct? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Like I have stated a couple of times now, capitalization of assets is not part of the agreement that we have. If they have money in the bank that they want to make capital purchases on during the agreement, that is up to them, but it wouldn't count towards any of the liability that we have with them with agreement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the responses. I'm satisfied on this topic and I will move on to the next. In the agreement, were there any terms for Canadian North to increase local employment to reduce the amount of rotational fly-in employees? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Not that I'm aware of. There are no specific conditions in our agreement. I don't know if there have been any discussions at the table, but at the end of the day we are contracting them to provide a service. How they do it as a business decision that they utilize... . If there are concerns on local employment, that would be best directed to the board of Canadian North. We have

no control over that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We all know that hiring local is much more cost effective than flying in rotational and transient employees. The term “break even” has come up several times over these discussions, and given the fact that Canadian North is heavily reliant on fly-in rotational employees, especially here in Iqaluit for their ramp and cargo attendants, I think that ensuring that Canadian North is taking advantage of all efficiency measures to reduce the amount of financial assistance would be necessary. I would like to ask if in the current agreement that is under discussion, if a similar term will be included. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While I appreciate where the member is going with this, I’m going to go back to some of the discussions we’ve had on NNI on capital projects where we have minimum requirements for Inuit employment, as an example. If a contractor is not able to provide those minimum requirements, there are some financial penalties to it, but the job still gets done. With the airline industry, if they don’t have enough employees on the ground to do the job, planes don’t fly. That is not an anticipated part of our negotiations. Thank you.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand that Canadian North needs employees to be working in order to operate and to provide this essential service, but I’m concerned over the inefficiency of this private organization in relying on southern workers to fill these functions, such as cargo attendants. I can’t imagine there are any barriers preventing Canadian North from finding local cargo attendants.

Given that the government is subsidizing the organization, I think this is an ideal time to negotiate that in the terms. The government is giving millions of dollars to this organization and the least the organization can do is return some of these funds to Nunavut through compensation and benefits. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask again if that will be included in the terms of the next agreement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Basically right now with the Canadian North agreement, we have a contract in place for duty and medical travel. With the exception of the reduced flights, that’s what we’re operating under. The member just answered his own question. It’s obviously cheaper for them to hire local, so that’s their incentive to do that if it’s cheaper and more efficient.

Mr. Chairman, we don’t have the resources to be sending people on oversight and looking at all these balances. We’ve got people who have been scrambling for months on end,

weeks on end, days on end, looking after operating some of these negotiations and trying to keep Nunavummiut safe. I understand where the member is going with this and if he wants to continue to lobby airlines to promote more local hiring or promote locally for people to apply for jobs, I think that's a great initiative, but it's not going to be part of these negotiations. The safety and well-being of Nunavummiut is my priority in this. Thank you.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have lobbied with Canadian North on this issue and I will continue to do so, but I think this is a unique opportunity for the Government of Nunavut for once to step in and also lobby Canadian North to do the same.

The issue that I would like to focus on is the break-even point that Canadian North is using, as presented to the Government of Nunavut and the break-even point which the Government of Nunavut has agreed to. That break-even point can be skewed and including inefficiencies, such as flying in unnecessary labour. My next question is: given this break-even point that has been agreed upon, what is the government's confidence in the figures that Canadian North has provided? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As Mr. Chown mentioned earlier, there's no perfect system under this. The member well knows there are

accounting practices that can be manipulated. I can't believe that that is the goal of Canadian North or any other contractor that we have worked through this whole exercise with to pad numbers. They're trying to keep their operation afloat, to keep their planes in the air. We need them; they need us. It has been a symbiotic relationship.

Probably Mr. Chown would be best suited to the accuracy of the information that's coming in from the reporting and from the accounting aspect of it. Through you, Mr. Chairman, maybe Mr. Chown would be able to give the member some confidence. Thank you.

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

Mr. Chown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the minister said, this isn't a perfect system and there is flexibility in what expenses you decide to incur as an organization. The airlines we have been dealing with have been cooperative in sharing information with us. They have shared previous period information as well so we can get a sense of whether expenditures look reasonable. We're dealing with millions and millions of dollars here. When you're looking at periods one by one and they seem to flow close together, you get a sense of reasonableness there. Do I think it's perfect? No, but I think we're about as comfortable as we can be with this.

As far as manipulating by flying in excess labour, it wouldn't really benefit them in any way. It's going to create an expense for them. It would be covered by part of our funding, but it's just money in the door and then right back out to whoever their employee was. I

mean, the room where there's more flexibility for that is really in things like maintenance or other internal costs potentially, but again, we have looked at it to see if trends look to be similar from previous periods. We're relatively comfortable that we're in the ballpark with these numbers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Chown. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the responses. Yesterday I expressed my concern over the amount of exemptions to the mandatory isolation period and asked if Canadian North cargo and ramp attendants were included in that exemption. I didn't get a clear answer at that point, but my next question will be: has Canadian North sought exemption from the mandatory isolation for cargo and ramp attendants to fly up? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't see that stuff. It goes through Dr. Patterson's office, but I would say it would be likely safe to assume that yes, there would have been. Thank you.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I will move on to my next topic and it's the scheduled flights. Would you be able to explain the process that was used to determine the minimum scheduled

flights that are currently under operation as well as how much of a reduction it was to the previous schedule prior to the pandemic? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know there were a number of parties at the table; government, Economic Development and Transportation, CPHO office, but Mr. MacKay would have been party to those discussions, so he would have a better sense of what was discussed and how it rolled out. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I thank the member for the question. That was basically based on what the needs were, primarily based on the needs of the CPHO. He had indicated that he could not do effective treatment or testing for COVID without a certain flight schedule and a certain number of flights into each community. I can't remember the exact number for each community that was required, but for Iqaluit-Ottawa, it was four flights a week that he needed.

That was basically the minimum that we had indicated to both airlines that we needed and that's what they gave us, and we worked from there to determine what kind of subsidy they would need to be able to provide that service in light of the fact that all travel to Nunavut, duty travel, medical travel, was almost all cut off and all other outside travel into Nunavut was cut off, so their revenues had dropped by about 95 percent. We

were just trying to bring them to a place where they could provide the minimum service to us. We wanted from the government side to provide the minimum amount of subsidy to provide that service. That was how we approached that negotiation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. MacKay. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My next question is I would like to know how much of a reduction the flight schedule currently has, and I would like to know roughly what percentage of their scheduled flights have been reduced to territory-wide. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Basically it would be somewhat community dependent. There are some regions that had flights four times per week that went down to twice a week; there were some that went to three times a week. The Rankin to Iqaluit leg was three times a week and then through the increased medical travel, it got increased to four, I believe. It's variable, but I would say probably with most communities, between a half and two-thirds of flights are still going. Again, it's variable by community and region on the impact of how often flights were flying to what we negotiated as a minimum standard. Thank you.

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

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

(interpretation ends) I would like to follow up on a few of Mr. Lightstone's questions. The minister mentioned in one of his responses staff who have been put through a lot of work and I believe he used the word "scrambling" at one point. I don't want to focus on that so much, but I want to understand on the government's side in terms of the non-disclosure agreement that has been signed or if there's more than one non-disclosure agreement, how many staff have signed those agreements. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have that level of detail; maybe Mr. Chown might. Are you just asking specifically with Canadian North or with both airlines? Both airlines.

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

Mr. Chown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have an exact number, but I would say probably five or six individuals would be close enough to the information that we require signing non-disclosure agreements and we've got a few other people involved in the process. That just wouldn't necessarily be seeing the technical data that would require them to sign disclosures, but probably five or six. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Chown. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Do any of those individuals have any expertise in the area of private sector corporate finance? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, Mr. Chown would probably be best suited to respond to that.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Chown.

Mr. Chown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As far as corporate finance, I would say no. I'm providing, along with our comptroller general, the majority of the financial support and analysis on this. We have also brought in an expert from the airline industry to help us with this and we've also got individuals within the government who, from previous employment, have experience in the airline industry. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Chown. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) It's encouraging to hear that there has been an expert in the airline industry brought in. Is that a consultant basis or is this somebody who works for the government and who has been seconded or is it a consulting contract in terms of airline industry expertise?

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was the same contractor we used when we set up the parameters of our medical and duty travel, Lufthansa. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Lufthansa would be helping. Will Lufthansa's involvement include reviewing those independent audited statements once they're provided? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's possible if there are any questions that the team reviewing documents, if they have something that they feel would need that input from an industry expert, then they would pull them in on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Within the context of this bill, Mr. Chairman, if it's appropriate, I would like to make a suggestion that if needed, the government seek additional expertise in that area that I have highlighted of corporate finance because I completely

respect the financial strength within the government, but corporate finance and public sector finance are very different. When we are dealing with the private sector here, I think it is important that the government have all of the expertise or specialized advice that they need. That is a suggestion for the minister. I would like to hear his perspective on that. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I absolutely agree with the member. In fact with our legal team we have a representative with BLG legal that also has some airline industry expertise that is also a part of this team, so we are not doing this in a silo. If we need any outside further expertise, we are not shy about asking for it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) That is reassuring to know.

I'll move on to the federal government's involvements. They have announced essential air access funding, and I believe the number in their news release was up to \$174 million over 18 months, and that is for the entire country, mind you. In terms of up to today, the status of that essential air access funding, where are we in terms of getting more federal dollars to assist? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are very close to an agreement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Main, please continue.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Is that the six-month agreement or six month "chunk," I'll call it? On what basis is the federal government going to be dividing up these funds? I sincerely hope it is not on a per capita basis. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, as it has been publicized, there are 140 communities added to the list for the \$75 million, but one of the things is it's not on a per capita basis. It is through negotiation of looking at needs. That is all I can say at this point. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I am trying to understand the process a bit better. Will this decision, when it comes from the federal government, the negotiation, will it reflect the higher cost of operating an airline in Nunavut as compared to other jurisdictions where fuel prices might be cheaper and there might be cheaper labour costs? Is that part of the formula or the consideration?

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am sure the member can appreciate I can't get into too much detail, but yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I'll stay on the issue of federal support.

There is a CBC news article from September 24 regarding the federal government subsidizing airlines. I think this is a conversation that is long overdue, COVID or no COVID. That is my personal position on this. The federal economic development minister was quoted as saying that "We think that Canadians living in our regions should not feel isolated and should not be isolated, and it's a job for the federal government to keep that connection a reality."

In terms of this new initiative which came through in the Throne Speech, with the essential air access initiative, will Nunavut airlines be excluded from the new federal funding or are they allowed to stack funding from two sources? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not know the ins and

outs of that announcement. My colleague, Minister Akeegok, might know more, but in general there wouldn't be. If they did stack funding, as an example, as in my response to Mr. Lightstone's questions, it would show on the revenue side of things of the airline and it would show that they didn't need our support as much, so we would get that money reimbursed of what we put in over and above their need.

I hope that answers the member's question. The rest of the question might be best directed in question period or written correspondence with the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation to see how those discussions are going on. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you, minister. At the end of the day, once the pandemic has subsided and hopefully that won't be too long in the future, and we are looking at the aftermath and these federal tax dollars and Nunavut tax dollars that have flowed into the airlines, what type of reporting or what will be provided in terms of transparency?

I am looking at a spreadsheet from the United States where, under the Essential Air Service Program, the government provides a subsidy and they have it listed route by route, to the dollar value, to the airline. I understand that the experts are going to analyze this independent audited statement, but in terms of what the public will be able to see where the tax dollars and for what reason, has that

been decided at this point in terms of the transparency and being able to assure the public that this was indeed a justifiable and needed expense? (interpretation)
Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is a great question. I think that when everything is said and done, when the monies are reimbursed, when we have examined how many duty travel tickets we have used, how many medical travel tickets, and consolidate all that information, we will know dollar wise to the dollar what it actually costs, what we have actually subsidized them, not for what we got back or services that we got in lieu of the subsidy. We will have a final accounting of it and that's when we will know, again, at the end of what we got as far as the value of what it cost us.

I think at the end of the day, like right now as an example, just their existence is helping us continue to provide service to our communities, to our residents, so their existence is a necessity; it is not an option. I think that level of comfort is there, where I will have to sit here again probably a year from now and justify the final accounting and what it actually cost us. Right now I am quite comfortable with the amount of usage that we have been getting, the offsets of ticket use, especially with medical travel, as more and more medical travel is occurring, as other jurisdictions are opening up their health care and dealing with backlogs that have occurred over the past few months. Every time someone takes a trip, that's money that we are getting

back from the subsidy that we are providing.

I think it's a great question and I appreciate the member giving me the opportunity to lay it out in a clear and concise methodology that we are not just giving them this money, all of it; some of it would be to just keep them alive. At the end of the day we are still getting our services provided out of this cost. Thank you.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Just to clarify, so there will be a public transparency piece and we don't know what that will look like, but there will be something publicly available that will detail or lay out where the monies flowed, and just the specifics in terms of this subsidy to airlines. (interpretation)
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know what format or what it's going to look like right now, but all of our spending is transparent and whether it comes through communication with the public or through the Regular Members' Caucus or just with the Assembly overall or just through our public accounts, there would be an accounting of it. I'm very confident that the members will have access and the public will have access to this information when all of the accounting is completed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you, minister. In terms of routing, I think one of the few positives that have come out of this pandemic that I could see on the airlines' side was when the route from Cambridge Bay to Rankin Inlet was running for a brief period and for a brief period, Nunavut residents could travel within Nunavut without leaving the territory. Is there any avenue for discussing specific route changes such as that one within the context of this pandemic or is that simply a decision for the airlines on their own? What is the government's involvement, if any, in routing? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: I'm actually surprised that the Chairman didn't mention Sanikiluaq being excluded from that list.

Mr. Chairman, the route that bypassed Yellowknife at that time was based upon the travel measures that we put in place through the CPHO, where NWT wouldn't have allowed our residents in and vice versa, we would not have allowed their residents in. Once that bubble was created, it brought Yellowknife back into play.

That being said, it was a combination of recommendations from the CPHO to make sure there was that link to Cambridge Bay because there were still flights going from Yellowknife, but with the travel restrictions in place, it would

have only been critical workers who would have been able to go or people who had been through the isolation.

At that point it is a kind of combination thereof to a certain degree, with health measures that dictated that route change, but ultimately it's the airlines' usage and volume that would typically factor in to them changing any routes. I'm sure they were keeping track of the volumes and the need of that as well. I am sure that they are paying attention to these proceedings, so hopefully that... .

I did find that route really interesting where a lot of people were being able to get through the Kivalliq from the Kitikmeot in that single day, which really eased a lot of pressure on some of our duty travel and medical travellers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you, minister. In terms of Churchill, Manitoba, which is part of the travel bubble, last I checked with Nunavut... . I will use my home community as an example. We used to be able to get to Churchill, Manitoba in a matter of 35 minutes and now it's a lot more. You have to go up to Rankin Inlet, and even to get to Whale Cove from Arviat, I have to go to Rankin Inlet.

In terms of Churchill and routings when we look at the next 12 to 18 months, I think there might be people wanting to go stay at a hotel for a weekend or go eat at a restaurant in a different town. People will be looking for holiday opportunities or recreational travel. Has there been any

discussion with Calm Air in terms of Churchill and the routing, and is there any benefit in terms of... ? I guess I can't ask the health minister, but in terms of public health initiatives, I'm trying to understand what the next year will look like in terms of routing for Kivallirmiut under Calm Air.
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You can ask the health minister, but in lieu, I'll ask the health minister.

There have been some discussions with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, which operates the health centre in Churchill, of trying to provide some increased services there so people don't have to go down to Winnipeg and isolate. We have been exploring those options through... . Again, I can't thank some of the staff at the Department of Health enough.

With our contract negotiations under this, it is still a minimum level of service standard. We are trying to keep the airlines operational. We're still trying to keep the people and goods flowing, but it has always been my intention and I think it has even been more recognized now that people from the Kivalliq receiving services in Churchill is a far more efficient way of doing it with the specialist services that are available there.

It is something that our team is continuing to look at, but it is not a part

of these discussions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickee. The final name on my list: Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning. (interpretation ends) Going through briefing notes, it is great to see that they are requesting 10 additional staff members and Inuktitut-speaking employees in the isolation hubs. I think that is a big plus because I know that is one of the issues. A lot of unilingual Inuit have issues with not being able to communicate. I just wanted to comment first on that.

(interpretation) I had a question (interpretation ends) on the last paragraph of page 14. It states, "Since the approval of \$1.26 million initial funding from Canada, the GN has increased volumes of travellers to Nunavut." Also, the very last sentence there says, "It also has been recognized that the guests at the isolation hubs continuously require additional support." Because of that, the request is to add another staff member. I'm curious to know what they mean by "...isolation hubs continuously require additional support." What more supports are not being mentioned? It seems to sound like it is a burden that there is... .
(interpretation) That is what I wanted to ask. Thank you.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just going to take a little bit of a step back. When Health and

Community and Government Services were putting these contracts together, when the travel restrictions came into place and the isolation hubs, it was decided as a path that got turned around in probably, I'm going to say, 36 hours to actually get contracts in place and people registering in a hotel in four different areas in four different cities. When I spoke earlier about how many people have been working around the clock; I know what my schedule has been like the last six months, and there are people who have been working unbelievable amounts of hours, especially at the beginning of this to get it set up.

When we talk about some of the issues and supports as things matured, as we started seeing volumes, especially when increased volumes were going through certain stages or peaks, we were seeing a lot of mental health supports that were needed, addictions supports were needed, just having someone to talk to, making sure the health supports were there. We have nurses that actually go on site. They won't check everyone every day, but their temperatures are checked at least once a week. They are followed up by phone regularly from the health side of things to see if they needed any help.

One of the issues that have come is with the security as well too, but some of the issues that our counsellors are going through are very challenging. As you can imagine, there with the alcohol and drug abuse that do occur, in which we work with people to help with their addictions and treatment. When that transitioned over to the contract that we had with the Qikiqtaaluk Corporation, even they had underestimated the

amount of effort that was needed and the resources that were needed to help people through this two-week isolation period. They had asked for additional resources to be provided.

We recognized that from the health standpoint, we had a good number of staff that was engaged. Again, I can't even say how many hours and weeks that they were engaged with people on a daily basis. We were actually sending people down to the hubs to help support the staff that were there. That is why we determined we needed to go the route with the Qikiqtaaluk Corporation because it was just too many health staff and community and government services staff that were engaged on a minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour basis that these are the same people who are going to be working if and when COVID comes here and planning for all that, there is just too much volume. We contracted it out, they requested more resources, and we gave it to them.

I hope that answers the member's question. Thank you.

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

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) The 10 isolation hub guest service coordinators, are those the positions that you just mentioned in terms of counselling or mental health; those are the Inuktitut-speaking workers that will be working there or have they already started? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know if all the counsellors are Inuktitut-speaking counsellors. I know there has been some collaboration with workers of having Nunavut Inuit down there working in these facilities has alleviated some of the pressure because they know the background, where some of the other mental health workers that we have are under contract are not necessarily Nunavut Inuit.

Maybe I'll do a quick little witness swap and maybe Ms. Brown will be able to give a little bit more background on what actual counselling services are available at the hubs and how they are accessed. I think it would probably be a fair question if that is what the member is looking for, through you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

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

Ms. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the mental health services provided, it has evolved over the last few months and we have test tried different methods of providing mental health that would meet the needs of those occupants.

Initially there were on-the-ground mental health staff from Nunavut that went down to each of the hubs, and then we added QC along with having the Kamatsiaqtut Help Line, which is available 24/7 to support the residents in the hub. Then we have regular nurses who are there during the day to monitor how people are doing. The residents get a phone call every day. The mental health line staff who are Inuktitut do check in with the residents as well.

In spite of all of that, we have learned that there are additional supports that are required. As of October 15, there will be one mental health nurse, one regular nurse, and one social worker in each of the hubs. QC provides the Inuktitut language services as well. There are multiple resources that are available and they vary from time to time because of turnover of staff, and also it takes a little while to inform and train people who are working there. We can't just take anybody and just plop them there, so we have to make sure that they are well equipped to take care of the residents properly. Thank you.

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

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's great to hear such good news, as it's not often that we get to hear about the details pertaining to the beneficial programs and resources that are being made available in the isolation hubs. This is very worthwhile information that we need to hear, and it really isn't outlined in the information that I have in front of me.

I would like to find out more information on the isolation hub in Ottawa. How many rooms are designated for the isolation program in Ottawa? It's stated that there are 370 people completing the isolation program in Ottawa per week. Does that mean that there are 360 rooms set aside that are used for the isolation protocols in Ottawa or is that for the entire group of travellers going to Nunavut, and how many hotels are actually set aside for that purpose? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know there have been some, again, peaks and valleys, and I know some parts of it are demand driven. I'm just trying to drag out my response a little bit while my colleagues get the information together. I'm not sure if they have it readily available, but through you, Mr. Chairman, maybe Ms. Brown could respond. If there is not the level of detail that we have with us, I can assure the member that we will provide it to her. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. We track daily occupancy of each of the hubs on a daily basis, so I can tell you that as of September 21, there were 147 medical travellers in the hubs. In the Winnipeg medical hub there was an additional 248. As regular public travellers, there were 279. It is a daily total of around 674 and that obviously varies from day to day, but it gives a glimpse into the kinds of numbers that we are seeing in each of the hubs. As of September 21, there were 5,576 medical and regular travellers that have gone through the hubs and that does not include the construction worker hub, which is separate under CGS. Thank you.

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

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you for that clarification. When I look at the 279 people who went through the isolation hubs for non-medical purposes,

if this number increases, do you plan on requesting that more rooms be set aside for isolation purposes in the hubs? Will the present facilities be sufficient? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That has been one of the challenges. We know when people are travelling for medical or duty travel, but it's the private travellers that we don't keep track of, who has left the territory and when they are coming back. Some of these peaks in the numbers were challenging to deal with and created a wait-list which forced us to actually open additional hubs. We have been able to meet the demand so far.

Again, we continue to strongly recommend non-essential travel be avoided, especially with the increases in cases in the south. I do not want to go down anywhere unless I absolutely have to. I think right now we are okay and if we need to re-examine the availability or capacity of rooms, it is something we will work with Community and Government Services to make sure that we can continue to meet the demand. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Ms. Nakashuk, do you have another question? Please.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you. Yes, it is understandable. Of course, though, we are going through very different times in Nunavut and we need to have this service, and we will have to continue that because these are very unique times. I agree; personally I do not

wish to travel down south either, definitely not for recreational purposes. We all need to keep this in mind.

Since the GN is covering the costs of accommodation, food, and other necessities for individuals in the isolation hubs, does the GN have a plan for addressing the additional expenses that are incurred because of people who are entering the isolation hubs after travelling for reasons that aren't medical or work related? What are some of the things that are being done to discourage people from non-essential travel? It's important to consider the financial impact on the budget for this program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's my last question.

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

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Obviously we cannot restrict people's movement to the degree where we are not allowing people in or out. We are allowing people in with conditions, but we cannot control people if they do want to leave.

I think all of us, and I mean all of us, I mean all Nunavummiut have a responsibility to recognize that these are unforeseen times and unparalleled times for the modern world to deal with something of this extent and I think we all have a responsibility from every layer of every government, of every association, of every individual to really take a serious, hard look at whether they do really need to travel right now, where you are going to go, and what you are going to be going into. If I can use this as a platform to continue to strongly recommend that people avoid any non-

essential travel outside the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that. I did say that was going to be my last question, but another issue just came to mind that I would like to bring up. There is constant feedback and comments coming from the people who are staying at the isolation hubs.

With the contract being through QC, you have identified a budget line for transportation, providing meals, laundry services, as well as security and you have identified and spelled out each one individually.

It appears to me that the most common complaint coming from people in isolation is that the food being provided isn't fresh. I know that many aspects of this program are fluid in that they are continually changing, while other aspects work well.

Can you please comment on the issue being raised about the food and tell me if there are any plans in place to address the many complaints? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is one of the common complaints that are brought forward and we actually do have a site set up for isolation relations complaints; food is one of them.

We do work very hard with our contractors to make sure that they provide a varied yet healthy menu, but Deputy Minister Brown just mentioned that there have been over 5,000 people going through these hubs with 5,000 individual tastes. I have had complaints that “I wanted a cheeseburger and I got a steak. There are too many vegetables; not enough vegetables. Chicken too many times. Beef too many times.” Food is undercooked or overcooked. There are legitimate complaints in there, but I’m going to say it’s impossible to appease 5,500 people in all their meal selections. We do work with the contractors when we get complaints. I’ve had pictures sent to us and things like that, but I strongly recommend that if people do have issues with the menu, they bring it up with the on-site coordinator, who will work with the contractor to make sure that the meals are satisfactory.

I have used the analogy in one of my press conferences that all of us have travelled around Nunavut to different places and some of the hotels you go into don’t ask you what you want for dinner. They ask you if you want dinner, so you kind of take what you get and that’s an unfortunate reality of these isolation hubs. We’re not going to be able to appease everyone’s dietary wants and not everyone can afford to do SkipTheDishes and other delivery service meals.

I do recommend that if people do have issues with the food selection available to them, they bring forward those issues to the isolation relations team so that we can work with our contractor to help. I have heard pop served too often or not enough and there are different needs. Unfortunately we don’t have the

capacity to do an individual menu for each individual that’s going through these hubs. It would be unbelievably complicated when you’re talking hundreds and hundreds of people.

I do recognize that it is an issue and I know we’re continuously working on it with our isolation teams. I know that’s not an answer, maybe, the member is looking for, but I hope that appeases that we do know it’s an issue and we’re continuing to work on it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Just a reminder, Ms. Nakashuk, we are on page 4 where we’re dealing with the delivery of food security for municipalities and special warrants for airlines. There is another page coming when we’re talking about the health care service delivery and the food and issues like that at a later date, or not at a later date but just later this morning. Ms. Nakashuk, do you have another question?

Ms. Nakashuk: I was referring to that. I’ll wait another time for that.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Nakashuk. We will move on. Next name on my list: Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In what is being discussed, we’re looking at the funding requests, money to be used by the communities, \$1.3 million. How did you arrive at that figure when it’s going to be divided by the communities? If the minister can give a definite answer, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was similar to a question we had last night where Mr. MacKay responded and, if I recall his response accurately, it was determined that with the money remaining, we could work with NTI to cost share a food program to continue providing food not just to the school food programs but also to elders as well too so that it hit the most vulnerable sectors. It was based on the size of the community and there are three different categories. If I recall correctly, I think it was \$40,000, \$90,000, and \$200,000, if I recall the numbers correctly from yesterday. Large communities like Iqaluit, as an example, got \$200,000, medium-sized communities got \$90,000, and then small communities got \$40,000. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The communities divide that up. When airline subsidies were being discussed, it was a concern on how exactly that money is going to be used by the airlines. Also considering the hamlets will be spending that money or through food programs when tax time comes, it might be a problem to some people and that's why I'm asking the question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The food program money was provided to the hamlets with very loose conditions on how they utilize it to

provide food out to members of the community. I'm not sure if the member is linking that to the CERB discussion that we were having yesterday. Just a clarification, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Qirngnuq, if you could clarify your question, please.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, it's partially linked to that discussion, as well as to the money that was provided for country food to aid the communities and to the hamlet for providing help to the elders. That's why I am asking the question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It didn't come out of this budget, but we did have programs that we had in-house dollars available through the Department of Environment to provide some money to the HTOs to provide country food within the community, as well as the wellness dollars that we had through the Department of Health, along with NTI partnering with us to be able to continue food programs for children and elders. We wanted to make sure that, again, the vulnerable sectors were at least assisted with. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Moving on to the third point regarding airlines, the Canadian North subsidies total \$10,760,000. How did you arrive at that figure? Were there discussions in the

departments? I don't know what they're doing outside of Nunavut. Is it coming from there or did they arrive at that figure themselves? I hope you can understand me, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question from the member. There were two and that's what complicates things with this scenario; there were two different negotiations. The first phase, when we provided money back in March or I guess April, it was negotiated along with Transport Canada where it was agreed upon that we would continue to provide the funds that we normally would provide. We took our annual usage, divided it by per week and provided those funds to the airline on the interim basis. Now, that didn't cover any of the general passenger travel, so the next phase actually brought in a review of the financials of just what they needed to keep alive. That's how that figure got negotiated. It is two separate negotiations, but the second one and the current one that is ongoing right now is just to keep them alive so that they don't go under. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Before we go to the next name on the list, we're going to take a 10-minute break. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 10:25 and resumed at 10:40

Chairman: Good morning. I would like to call the committee meeting back to order. Earlier we were on page 4, Executive and Intergovernmental

Affairs, and I was taking questions on all five items on that page. The next person on my list for questions is Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, colleagues, minister and to his staff, good morning.

You mentioned about Government of Nunavut duty travel and medical travel with the airlines. Does that extend to the at-arms-reach entities such as the Qulliq Energy Corporation and the Nunavut Housing Corporation? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, it does. Thank you, Mr. Chairman

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that response there. On to a different subject, still on the airlines, with the reductions of services in the Kivalliq due to COVID-19, there are now longer wait times in Rankin Inlet, so now more than ever the government needs to ensure there is proper support during layovers in Rankin Inlet, especially for new parents and elders. I am thinking about them especially. What support is being given to them, if any, and are there any being considered? Will it continue on past December if need be? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We already have a policy in place through our Medical Travel Policy that any layover for more than four hours, they can talk to their medical travel coordinator who can arrange day rooms available at local hotels. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thoughts and concerns with Kuglukturmiut as there was a fire this morning.

Moving on, at the onset of the pandemic, the GN announced and quickly reversed its decision to have general travellers pay for their own isolation costs. Why was that decision initially made? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The way that that conversation evolved was with the non-essential travel restriction put in place, after a period of time it was recognized that people were flat out ignoring it and still continuing to travel, knowing that that isolation hub was in place and knowing that they would have to go through it. In addition, there were people that were in isolation already that continued to break isolation and have to start over and that became recognized as an additional cost to the Government of Nunavut.

I guess there are a couple of different things. When we first discuss it, it

sounds like a very logical thing: if you break your isolation, you should be on your own. We have agreed to pay the 14 days. Where the challenge came in was actually administering it because it is one thing to say non-essential travel is restricted. Who determines what non-essential is? Do you want to make that decision? Do I want to make that decision? Not necessarily. Some are more obvious than others. That was a definite factor into it in the reconsideration.

Plus, when you take a look at how, for example, if somebody broke isolation and were removed from the hotel or have to start over again, if they were to do it on their own, if you do not have the financial means to do that, which many Nunavummiut do not, credit cards and that type of thing, it would put a very big strain on the public based on the restriction that we put in of having the mandatory 14-day isolation. Then if you take a look at if you are putting a financial burden on somebody, there was the legal right to mobility aspect of it as well.

On second thought, as some of these concerns were raised, like I said, a lot of these decisions that came to us as a cabinet, things were changing by the minute, by the hour. It was a very complicated process, but at the end of the day it likely would have taken resources that we don't have to administer something like that and some question to the legality of it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for your response. How much of the isolation costs have been attributed to the general travellers? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: As my most recent statistic, approximately 47 percent. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Pedersen.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize if this is the wrong time to ask this question, but on my way here to join these meetings, I passed through Yellowknife and I went to go visit some friends at a hotel, and I literally bumped into a constituent of mine and many other Kitikmeot residents who informed me that they were in this hotel for isolation. This surprised me because I didn't see security anywhere in sight. My question is: is Chateau Nova Hotel in Yellowknife an isolation hub and, if so, why was there no visible security? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Pedersen. There is a separate page to deal with isolation hubs, but I will allow the question. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't speak to that specific example. There are protocols in place where security is controlling people in and out, you know, smoke breaks, fresh air, or just to walk around the parking lot for a little while. Ms. Brown would probably be able to give you a little bit more detailed information on the actual process behind or maybe Minister

Kusugak may have some information as well too, but we will try through Ms. Brown first. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Yellowknife isolation hub is one of our hubs that only have a handful of people at any one time. On a busy day they will have ten people isolating. As of right now, today for example, they do not have any. All the protocols and policies are the same in the Yellowknife hub as across the other hubs. If there are people, individuals who are not complying with that, we would follow up with them when we became aware of it. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Brown. Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Like anywhere, if we know about it, we can do something about it. The member may want to pass along that person's name so that we could do an investigation if they broke isolation protocol. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The issue wasn't the individuals breaking isolation; they appeared to be following rules.

Moving on, earlier this week, I think, on CBC News there was a story about bed bugs in that hotel. Will the minister ensure that the hotel addresses this problem so that the safety of Nunavut and Kitikmeot residents who are

required to stay at this hotel feel safe that they can stay there without encountering bed bugs? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickeys: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the hotel is located in the NWT, they would fall under their public health orders, which would have had some conditions on bed bugs as a topic, so I am sure they are already dealing with this, if they haven't dealt with it already.

I personally... . Oh, sorry. It sounds like Ms. Brown would like to supplement my response. I have not been made aware of any direct complaints from any Nunavummiut, but Ms. Brown may know otherwise. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the question on that particular bed bug issue. As soon as we were made aware of the article, we followed up with the hotel and they are putting in the decontamination process for the rooms. In our investigation of it, we did not find any bed bugs, but regardless, the process is being followed to clean up the room.

Just for clarity's sake too, there is a hub manager who oversees the Yellowknife hub to make sure that these things are attended to, that the isolation protocols are followed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Brown. Ms. Towtongie, you have a question? Go ahead, please.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is: is Nunavut the only jurisdiction with border control measures, for example, isolation hubs? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickeys: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. But it is the only jurisdiction with airline access. Other jurisdictions in Canada seem to have highways. Can I have an example of which other jurisdiction does have border control measures or isolation hubs? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickeys: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The most obvious example would be the Government of Canada. People who arrive in Canada internationally, if they don't have an isolation plan and one that Public Health agrees to, they are put into a hotel for a two-week period to isolate, covered by the Government of Canada. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickeys. I want to remind members again that we are still on page 4, which is dealing with airlines and the delivery of food within municipalities. There is a separate page to deal with the isolation hubs. Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the reminder. It did connect to my next question and this is with Calm Air. In May, federal funding was fully expended and Calm Air did request on May 29 to allow operations for up to 28 and the amount agreed upon was \$2.6 million, or \$650,000 per week. With these costs, looking at the future of airline subsidization, are you coming into agreement with the Government of Canada to subsidize some of the airline costs? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is part of the discussions that we are having with the federal government. We are very close to an arrangement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for your response. The months I'm looking at with our briefing notes, the assistance package to Calm Air was \$9.6 million between March 30 and June 30, and the maximum financial assistance agreed upon by the parties, I assume the GN and Calm Air, is \$8.9 million, almost \$9 million. With those discussions with the Government of Canada and let's suppose the COVID pandemic continues after December 2020, are we looking at estimated costs per month, per week? What are we looking at as a government? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those are currently under negotiation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question I wanted to ask was sort of answered already. It was asked by my colleague from Rankin Inlet. The federal government has stated that they cannot immediately implement what is being discussed here. Calm Air and the Government of Nunavut, it sounds like they ask for help from Transport Canada, but the federal government indicated that they will not be able to put that together right away. It would have to come through an agreement. Are you getting close to reaching an agreement? Can we expect the agreement to be reached this month or in the next two or three months? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't say whether it would be done by the end of this month. It's only a few days away, but we are quite close in our negotiations. We're just back and forth with some of the financial documents, again, to make sure that we're doing our due diligence on what we're providing the airlines.

At the same time, with the federal government side of things, again, those discussions are very close to being final and how it would work is the federal government doesn't give the money to the airlines. We negotiate our arrangement with them and then any

federal monies we would receive specific to airline support we would use to offset those expenditures. That's why, if you look at some of the special warrant monies, they have been decreased by federal funding that we have used through some of the previous arrangements we made with the federal government, so it shows a decrease in the special warrant. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Good morning, minister. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Let me start off with the negotiation part with the federal government and Canadian North, not to mention Calm Air. Have there been negotiations when it comes to these not duty travellers, not medical travellers, for those people who are just paying it themselves? Has the GN considered for those people to be on the subsidy in regard to these... ? Let me put an example. From Sanirajak to Igloolik it's only a 15-minute flight and it's very costly. Has the GN put into consideration at negotiation tables that these people also need some subsidy program? My first question is this: is that on the table too? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we negotiated our contract with the airlines on our medical and duty travel, there were some conditions in there to provide economy fares to general travellers. Those conditions are still in place. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Kaerner.

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to encourage you further to have that approved.

(interpretation ends) Moving on to my second question on the money part from the directorate from executive affairs, I don't know if this question was asked, there are five items that are listed in your budget when it comes to not previously authorized spending dollars. How were they determined when the negotiation was going on? When I tried to compare them with my uneducated guess, I would like to say, can you explain on these items part where it's roughly to \$9.6 million and there's some additional money there? Item 1 and items 2 and 3 are substantially equal to \$9.6 million. That's my uneducated guess, so if you can further elaborate on these other two items that don't really match when I tried to calculate it, so please further explain on those items. (interpretation) Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am a little unclear of where the member is going on this one. Where the initial phase of the airline support was, again, that formula that we used with Transport Canada's direction to utilize traditional costs that we would be using; traditional seat usage, I'll use that as a term. Whatever seats we would typically be buying in a weekly period, that's what we based our formula on the support for the airlines in the initial phase, then we went back and did a lot more financial... .

We had to make a very quick decision with Transport Canada oversight. The first phase of our real negotiated terms or if you want to call it “second phase,” we took a really good look at their financials, their revenues, and their expenses, making sure it was only Nunavut-specific costs that were associated with the analysis and that is where we made the second phase on. The amounts are based upon that. There is no rounding or anything along those; they are exact numbers. Thank you.

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

Mr. Kaernerck: (interpretation) Thank you Mr. Chairman. What about this one, minister? You stated earlier that everything has an end point. It started in April and then it went on in May and June. There is always a deadline for the money that you are bringing out. Is there a deadline for the money that you are asking for in September and how long are you planning to use that money for? What’s the deadline for this money that you are asking for? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you Mr. Chairman. December 31. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) In accordance with that date, when there are reduced flights happening throughout Nunavut territory-wide, is the department considering maybe to increase or reduce until

December 31? How is the agreement between the Government of Nunavut, Canadian North, and Calm Air when it comes to travel restrictions, for example, the scheduling dates? Is the GN still in agreement to have these flights three or four times a week? How is this put into place? (interpretation) Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I covered this a little bit earlier, but just to clarify, with the reduced schedule that the airlines are operating on right now, the minimum standard was worked and established with the chief public health office to make sure we’ve got the testing capacity on a reasonable turnaround time, which again has proven to be a challenge.

With regard to any increases in flights, again, that would be up to the loads of the airlines. Right now we are basically paying for flights. Even if they were to fly empty, we are paying for those flights. Thankfully some of them are medical and duty travellers that we are getting some money back from, but we are more worried about maintaining a minimum standard.

I used the example earlier of the Iqaluit-Rankin Inlet; it was reduced to three times a week and through demand, the airline increased it to four times a week. As the demand is there, the airlines are going to continue to increase their flight frequency. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister (interpretation ends) Is there an agreement in place, an agreement in principle, where you guys are in negotiations at the table as the department itself with Canadian North and Calm Air? Has there been consideration where at least you create a bubble hub for these people, for the communities who are living up north like Grise Fiord, Arctic Bay, and Resolute Bay; for those communities?

Let me try to be clear. When it comes to the food subsidy program, does that also come into play with Nutrition North, healthy foods? Is there an agreement saying, for instance, using Sanirajak as an example, maybe as a bubble hub until December 31? You mentioned on this agreement, so is that also on negotiating tables? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know I spoke to this a little bit during one of my oral questions earlier this week where even at one point, to deal with the wait-list volume for medical travellers, due to the backlog we had started looking at a hub here in Iqaluit. There was a public uproar over that even when we were just looking at it. It was unbelievable because we are bringing people into the territory that haven't been through the isolation without the restrictions that a critical worker would be travelling under.

The risk involved is obviously far greater the more people we bring into the territory without going through that isolation process. If Sanirajak as an

example, if there was an isolation hub there and somebody broke their isolation, they could potentially pass on COVID-19 to a community resident, which could then spread throughout the community. The risk is far too great to take that path unless they're under a severe controlled environment, and realistically the only controlled travellers that we have right now are the medical travellers or duty travel. If you are a general traveller, we don't have the controls in place. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Kaerner: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With my last question here, not real last, but the last question for now, how much federal dollars have been used with the medical travellers and essential travellers between Iqaluit and Ottawa, and how much of the GN's money has been used for it up until now? It's my last question, but I'll have other questions later on. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For medical and duty travel, it's all Government of Nunavut expenses. Now, we do have some arrangements within NIHB on medical travellers, but that is just as per norm. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. We have spent quite a bit of time on this page now, so I'm going to use my discretion and we're going to move on. We are on the Department of Executive

and Intergovernmental Affairs. Total Department. \$20,783,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Page 5 is the Department of Finance, and just a note that the \$4.1 million was spent under special warrants, which was later funded by the federal government, so the page is a net zero balance, but I will allow if anybody has any questions on this particular page. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I won't ask questions about the money so much; just in terms of the rollout of this wage subsidy or wage program.

The briefing material mentions that because Nunavut has been fortunate enough to avoid a confirmed case of COVID-19, workers' safety concerns have not yet emerged as they have elsewhere in Canada. I'm not sure if that's entirely accurate. Speaking with the local businesses in Arviat and Whale Cove during the lockdown period, they did have problems getting their employees to show up to work when there was a lot of uncertainty and maybe less understanding around COVID-19. That's just a comment.

The total amount available was \$4.1 million and 48 eligible businesses have applied to date, 870 workers, and it says that the funds will expire unless extended by the Minister of Finance. Just to roll all those items up into one, if the minister can give us an update or a look forward in terms of this wage premium program. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hicke: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is obviously one component of a federal program that I'm going to take this opportunity to thank the federal government wholeheartedly on the flexibility that they have allowed us. They had a wage limit set up on it which was below our minimum wage, so theoretically no Nunavummiuq would have qualified for the federal program. They did allow us some flexibility, of which we brought the initial phase of health and safety positions across the territory.

Since then we wanted to be very cautious of how wide we rolled this out because it is limited money within the fund. When we saw the first applications come in, we recognized that that wouldn't fully utilize the funds expended, so we opened it up more to the retailers and things like that. We're still analyzing that uptake and we're taking a look because applications are still open for another few days or close to a week. We're still analyzing the impact of that.

We will make a decision within the next few weeks, I would say, whether additional applications would be accepted. If we have money in the fund and there's an appetite for it, we definitely want to make sure that we're helping industries across the territory so that at least the COVID impact is minimized as much as we can have an effect on it.

I do recognize the interpretation that the member put on the impact to retailers, such as putting up Plexiglas and the

challenge of workers coming to work. There's still a lot of fear and uncertainty around COVID-19, so I appreciate the member's comment. Thank you.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) My final question on this is: when this money is transferred over to eligible businesses from the government, how do you ensure that the premium is being provided to the workers? I mean, we don't want to overcomplicate the program and ask for too much paperwork because that will keep the private businesses from applying, but at the same time we want to know that the funds are making it into the pockets of the affected workers. How is that verified? That's my final question. (interpretation) Thank you.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for the sake of operational clarity, Mr. Chown would probably be best suited to respond to that, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Chown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The businesses that apply are required to submit to us their payroll data as part of their application process, so they actually submit payroll data to support the amounts they have requested. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Chown. I don't have any other names on this page, so we will move on. This page does not require approval because it's a zero balance. Go to page 6. Department of Health. There are three items on this page. Briefly, Item 1 is staff requirements to manage the isolation hubs; Item 2, associated costs with isolation travel in southern locations; and Item 3, required to cover the ongoing incremental costs of isolation hub operations. Questions? Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make a comment. The reason why I asked if Nunavut is the only jurisdiction with border measures is because I was not thinking of international flights. What I was going after was internal domestic flights. I see Nunavut as being the only jurisdiction that has access by airline. That's just a comment. I don't see any other jurisdiction like British Columbia having isolation hubs to Alberta. That is a comment I wanted to make. I was looking at internal isolation hubs because there's a cost to this and we have to negotiate with Canada to subsidize isolation hubs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Absolutely and I didn't realize the member was looking at that avenue. One other example in Canada is the Northwest Territories, where they have two communities set up, Inuvik and Yellowknife, where they have isolation hubs established. If you live in any other community and you travelled outside the

NWT other than to Nunavut or Yukon, I believe they have a bubble there too, that you would have to isolate and if you lived outside those two communities, you have to go to one of those two communities for the 14-day isolation before you go to your home community. We are not the only jurisdiction to be doing this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Earlier this month the minister stated that country food would be offered to people in isolation hubs up to twice a week. Has this been rolled out? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my knowledge, it has been rolled out in all isolation hubs, yes. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you. Good morning, minister, staff, colleagues, and Nunavummiut.

I don't have very many questions on this, but I'm just wondering; when people do want to come up to Nunavut, there are other provinces, but isolation hubs are only in Winnipeg coming up this way. Were there isolation hubs in the other provinces besides Ontario? Thank you.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The member is correct there. With our restricted travel right now, if you're not a Nunavut resident or a member of the land claim agreement with NTI, you're not allowed to travel here unless you were coming up for critical work reasons. We currently have isolation hubs in Ottawa, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The reason why I'm asking this is we do have people who go home to their home communities other than Ontario. Maybe they live in Banff or elsewhere. Do those people have to go to Ottawa to self-isolate and come up north or can they come up directly from British Columbia through that route to come up to Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When people put in their isolation hub request for space, they would put in their travel itinerary. They have to provide a ticket to get into isolation. You have to have proof that you are going somewhere in the territory. As an example, if you were flying from Vancouver, you would have two choices: coming through it from the west, either through Edmonton or through the Northwest Territories in Yellowknife. You have two options on where you could choose to isolate. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the government for looking after Nunavummiut. We have been lucky so far, but we do have people that travel home that live in Nunavut that go down south for a few weeks and have to come up. The only problem I have with that is that we have people that, only because they're human, will break rules. I'm just wondering if you have any control over that because I believe some people believe they're above the law. They do that, human beings. Some people try to do anything to come up without self-isolating, but people do work because they're important enough. They're not able to self-isolate. They have given a letter to come. I'm just wondering if you have anything like that in place for you to know or if you have any control over anything like that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As of right now, any planes coming into the territory, every passenger, everyone that gets on that plane needs to have a letter authorizing them to enter the territory of Nunavut. There are no ways around it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. I would like to ask a question while we're on that. I follow FlightAware quite regularly and I noticed a charter flight that went from... This was just last week. It went from Winnipeg, stopped in two communities in Ontario, then stopped in Sanikiluaq, then came to

Iqaluit, and then back to Winnipeg. How are these kinds of charters tracked by the government? Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know from discussions I've had with Dr. Patterson on this, maybe Ms. Brown would be able to supplement my response, but I do know that when charters of that nature do come into the territory, they are registered and typically nobody is getting off or on. Somebody may be getting on, but nobody is getting off. There wouldn't be any contact with ground crew. Even the refuellers in the communities are practising the social distancing and the safe signing of documents, even for their fuel loads. Probably Ms. Brown would be able to maybe give a bit more detail on that, but I'm not sure what. He is either made aware or...let me preface this.

We did have one instance. I believe it was publicized in the paper where a charter went into a community where one of the people on there didn't have the authorization and they had to continue on with the flight to isolate outside the territory. They weren't even coming into Nunavut, but they were on a plane that landed and some people that were approved to get into the territory were on, so it turned into a bit of a bonfire, if you want to call it that. People in the community were freaking out because this plane landed that they didn't know about when, as it turned out, people were informed and it was done with all the protocols and everything, but there was one person on there that didn't leave the flight that wasn't part of the original listing.

We did have some pretty serious discussions with the airline company, and all charter companies that work in Nunavut know the rules. There wouldn't be any flights coming into the territory without Dr. Patterson and his team's knowledge. There are a lot of safeguards in place right now. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Akoak, do you have another question? Go ahead, please.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want assurance for our Nunavummiut, especially the smaller communities that do have essential workers that seem to be free to travel between our borders, that there is a plan in place that they do self-isolate in the community or before coming into the community. Some people either said they feel important enough that they don't have to do this, but I just want assurance from the government that we as Nunavummiut and in the smaller communities are safe. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's my final question.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Akoak. The other question you had was also your final question. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm really glad the member brought this up. I was hoping to work it into one of my responses earlier this week and I just didn't take the opportunity as it appeared, so I have been kind of planning and hoping that this would come up.

I'm going to go through the actual critical employee responsibility and I'm going to read directly from the information from our website. "Upon

arrival in Nunavut, the employee must commit, for the initial first 14 days, to:

- Provide a daily update to their manager/supervisor on the status of their health and disclose the presence or absence of any signs or symptoms;
- Self-monitor daily for signs and symptoms of illness;
- Follow infection prevention and control protocols; including diligent hand hygiene;
- Practice social distancing of two meters, reduce close contact with colleagues, and avoid shared spaces where possible (i.e., facilitate virtual arrangements);
- If a front-line health care provider, wear a mask at all time even if they are asymptomatic;
- Maintain appropriate physical distancing with others (at least 2 meters) when travelling to and from work and between shifts;
- Remain isolated at home on days when not required at their workplace;
- Self-isolate immediately if symptoms develop and contact the public health unit or health centre to receive further instructions."

There are measures in place that every person that comes into this territory under critical worker exemption are supposed to be following these and, if they're not, please let us know. Thank you.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends)

Just on the same topic of the critical workers, I mean, the argument that has been put forth by some people is that because we have these exemptions for critical workers and because we have some people coming up without isolating, all this effort and money that is being put into the isolation hubs is meaningless because we have some who are coming up. From a public health standpoint or from a health standpoint, how can you justify this effort, expense, and hardship for the isolation hubs? Does it mean something? Does it help Nunavut, given that we do have exemptions for other persons? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe absolutely yes. When you go over the requirements that I just listed out for a critical worker that they have to adhere to, if they don't, they could be not able to return again. Their employer could be penalized, for example, if company A brings up people and they refuse to self-isolate, we could stop approving company A's employees' applications. There have been, I would say, roughly a little over 10 percent of critical worker employees requesting to come here that have been denied.

There is a questionnaire that they have to go through even to come here. I did mention it in an oral question, but I'll say it again: employee's travel history over the past three weeks, their name and birthdate, a statement that the employee is asymptomatic, a brief explanation from the employer to why that employee is deemed critical, and

any measures have to be outlined that would be taken by the employee to self-isolate outside of work hours. That's part of the application process to even come here.

There are a lot more strenuous conditions put on critical worker employees in and outside the workplace that the general population wouldn't necessarily be falling under the same guidelines because if we go to the voluntary self-isolation again, and hopefully we will be able to do that someday, that the responsibility is on that individual and there are shared living accommodations and things that would exasperate the risk.

Every decision that is made is a balance of risk versus reward, if you want to call it that. The whole point of these critical workers coming in is because they're critical to the operation or the provision of services to Nunavummiut. That's the balance that we continually have to work with. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) To summarize the minister's response, from my understanding, even though the exemptions are in place, these isolation hubs are still necessary and they are something that is helping to reduce the risk. The risk is not zero. The risk of COVID coming into Nunavut is still there, but even with all of these exemptions in place, the isolation hub operation is contributing to greater or lesser risk for Nunavummiut. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Absolutely, otherwise I wouldn't support it. It would still be a recommendation of the CPHO, but if I felt that the risk wasn't being reduced enough for this measure, then I wouldn't support it. I absolutely believe that the over 5,000 people who have gone through these isolation hubs are 5,000 people who have a very low risk of bringing COVID into the territory because they have just sat and paid that price for that 14 days to help keep us safe. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) The minister mentioned earlier that to date about 47 percent of the folks staying in the isolation hub have been for general travel and the rest, I'm interpreting, either duty or medical travel. When somebody goes into a hospital, if it's in Winnipeg or Ottawa or Edmonton, my understanding is that they're at a greater risk of contracting COVID just because of medical facilities being what they are. I wonder if the minister could confirm that out of all these travellers, the medical travellers are, I don't want to say the most dangerous, but they're at the most risk of developing an infection of COVID-19 based on public health information. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You would think so, but

actually the opposite is the fact. Our medical travellers are actually the safest ones. They're not going into an emergency room; they're going to an appointment at a specialty clinic if they're travelling on medical travel where there are strict conditions that are imposed on each and every medical facility to reduce that exact risk that the member is talking about.

We have all heard stories in the past, "If you want to get sick, go to the hospital," but if you're sitting in the waiting room with a bunch of people who are sick, waiting to see a doctor, it is one thing. With the COVID controls that are put in place now like we have, if you are feeling symptomatic, you don't go to the health centre; you call the health centre. It's the same conditions in other jurisdictions that if you're feeling symptomatic with COVID-19, you're supposed to contact public health and arrange for a test, unless obviously if somebody is coming in by ambulance and even then there are measures taken. Even here in town, if somebody is unconscious and they can't go through those screening questions, the staff at the hospital are let known so that they can put their PPE on and everything before that person comes into the facility.

Proof is in the pudding, I guess. Right now our medical travellers are actually the safest ones as long as they remain in that medical infrastructure setting.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you, minister, for clarifying that.

I think it helps to explain to the public, maybe, why general travellers and medical travellers are being housed in the same facility.

Moving on to the budget amounts, the briefing material that we have in front of us lists a breakdown of the isolation hub expenses. I have a question about the amount listed for nursing. There's a nursing expense of \$32 per day and this is a forecast, mind you, but the total amount forecasted for that item is \$4.9 million. If we could get an explanation as to the nursing costs associated with the isolation hub. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question. I think it just goes to show at what lengths we're going to, to try to make sure people are cared for in these hubs. The nurses that are on call there, as was mentioned earlier by Deputy Minister Brown, there are temperature checks periodically throughout the stay, but there are phone calls done daily to make sure that any symptoms arise or any issues that are needed... . Not everyone checks in on the same day, so sometimes they're doing temperature checks on these people and they're calling these people. It's the same person doing the same two jobs or more every day, but Ms. Brown would have a lot more detail on the actual rollout of the roles of what those nurses are doing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for that question. The work that the contracted nurses are doing in isolation hubs is that they are allocated to each of the hubs. They provide 24/7 coverage. They call the residents every day to check on their status. If somebody gets sick, they will arrange for them to go to the hospital, be accompanied, and make sure the protocols are followed. If people run out of drugs, they will make sure that the pharmacy requirements are met. They will do the check-ins with new moms in the hubs. They're quite occupied in that sense and that's where the funding is going into. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Brown. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you for the explanation. Also listed in this briefing material is security costs and the security amounts listed are quite significant, quite an eye-popper. When we look at this total amount, which is quite large, I wonder if we could get an explanation in terms of how those contracts are managed and what the goal of the security companies involved is. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's more on the operational side and I'm sure Ms. Brown has been kept up to date with her colleagues from Community and Government Services, so maybe Ms. Brown might be best suited to respond to that.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brown.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman. Regarding the security arrangements and the payment, that is part of the contract that CGS has negotiated. In terms of what role that the security guards play, they ensure that there are no breaches in terms of isolation. They monitor to make sure that people are reminded of keeping their distance in the mass. When people leave their rooms to go outside, for example, for a walk, they make sure that they're monitored in terms of coming back. They have a relationship role as well. If they have questions, they're visible and present everywhere, so residents can go and ask them questions and request assistance. They make sure that nobody leaves the hotel grounds as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Brown. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you. In terms of security, the contract itself, what efforts have been made to ensure that competitive pricing is being offered to the government? Look at Winnipeg for example. There is more than one private security company operating in Winnipeg. In Ottawa, I would imagine, there is more than one. How much shopping around has been done when it comes to these contracts or will that be something that is looked at? Are we locked into a contract going to December 31 of this year in terms of security, or is there room for competition or competitive pricing bids? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a couple of different factors here. As I had mentioned earlier, this was put together initially in 36 hours, so there are a number of challenges for Community and Government Services to put these contracts in place.

Specifically with the security, I know there are different security contracts in each hub, but I believe they were sole sourced. With regard to the opportunity to go out for tender, again, now we don't know when that end date is and we have a relationship with the companies that are there right now, and the staff from those security companies have been working with Nunavummiut now for going on six months.

There are benefits to not changing; of having to flip over to another company that would be unfamiliar with the isolation hub protocols and everything. It could change or benefit that way. With regard to ongoing plans, I'm not aware of any shifts from what we are doing right now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I do appreciate the issues that must have been encountered around trying to get the isolation hubs working in a very short time, but I do have concern over the sole sourcing of the security function. What efforts can CGS make in terms of ensuring that the terms of the contract are competitive and that we are not getting ripped off or, I'll say, gouged on the security component? It is my understanding that even though a sole

source contract is in place, the government could go approach other companies and say, "What would you charge us for this service," if we were to in terms of testing the waters. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under the circumstances I am sure that did happen, but Minister Kusugak is available to respond directly to the member's question.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank my colleague for the question. As the member is aware, when COVID happened and we needed to get into isolation and when these isolation hubs were put up, initially you don't think that there needs to be security over and above what the hotels provide, but it became apparent very early on that there was going to need to be security to safeguard everybody who was at these isolation hubs. When that became apparent, there was interest from the contractor to say they would like to provide the service. That negotiation happened.

Mr. Chairman, our procurement department is familiar with different kinds of contracts that are let, through the years of negotiating in terms of dealing with security and all the other kinds of contracts. Our procurement department is familiar with this kind of contracting and they negotiated as best they could to provide the kind of service

that is necessary to make everybody in the place safe and secure.

Since then and today our department, working with the Department of Health, is monitoring the situation and if there needs to be changes or additions or tweaks in the security portion of it, our department is working with Health to stay on top of the situation as best as we could. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) Will CGS be looking at ensuring... ? What specific measures will CGS be taking to ensure that we are getting the best price for the best service when it comes to the security aspect? If we are under a sole source contract which was entered into in very quick type deadlines, I would like to have confidence that we are getting a competitive price on this service. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Probably again, Minister Kusugak would be best suited to respond to this question. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would like to at this time also acknowledge and recognize the hard work that our procurement department has been doing, especially during this

pandemic. Our procurement department has been very active in looking into best practices and our department is very familiar with industry standards and cost when it comes to contracts such as security.

I assure my colleague that the security rates that are being provided at this current time are competitive, and that our department will do its best to ensure that the funds being expended for security purposes in this particular case are those that do not exceed the current industry standards in terms of providing contracts for such service, Mr. Chairman. I will reiterate these comments with my procurement department, who I am sure are paying very close attention to the discussions currently. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman (interpretation ends) Thank you, minister. I would encourage your department to work on that because it is concerning when we see sole source contracts, and the total amount listed for security here is \$17.2 million, and so that's a chunk of taxpayer dollars. That's just a comment.

My last line of questioning is on looking forward to the Christmas travel period. It is traditionally a very high volume travel period for Canadians and we are talking about the period going up to December 31. In terms of looking ahead, if we see a surge in travel or an uptick in travel south, we can expect an increased demand on the isolation hubs in January. In terms of forecasting and trying to anticipate what is going to happen, what

are the Department of Health's current projections? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I will reiterate what I said earlier. While we have this non-essential travel, I strongly encourage people not to travel, especially as cases are increasing in the south. It's even more risky to travel, but as far as directly to the member's question, again, we know that there is going to be a surge. How big that is or what that's going to look like is up to the general populace. We can make our best guesses, but we do anticipate that there will be another surge at Christmastime.

I'm really hoping that people will practise their own due diligence and restrict any non-essential travel. I know we're missing our families. We're missing our loved ones all across the country, if not the world. These are different times. We have to continue to make these sacrifices, not only for our own individual well-being but for our entire community and territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I don't have any further questions. I would like to suggest that the department or the government look at incentives for people to travel within Nunavut. It could be targeted at the tourism industry, it could be paying for hotel stays if somebody from Arviat wants to travel to

Rankin Inlet, for example, to visit family instead of travelling to Winnipeg or it could be a bonus type of payment paid to the civil service, "If you are in Nunavut as of January 1, we're going to issue you a COVID New Year's incentive bonus of \$500 and if you travel south, well, I'm sorry, we won't be able to pay you that." I don't know whether that would help to reduce the demand on the isolation hubs. It's just a wild idea. No further questions. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: I didn't hear a question there; it's just a comment. I have two more names on my list to ask questions and we are required not to go past noon. I'm going to ask: pursuant to our rules, do members agree to remain in session until we finish with Bill 46? Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't be very long on this. I'm just wondering: how long can the government ensure country food to be available on a menu if there's a remainder of COVID-19? If it carries on, how long will you be able to have country food on the menu? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hopefully for the foreseeable future. There are different seasonal country foods that are available. We are going to continue to work with our partners to do the best we can to

continue to provide country food on an ongoing basis as needed. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. If the supplies ever do run low, we will always ask: can elders have the first priority? Can they be given the priority if the supplies ever run low? Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's my final question.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to think that is a given, but the comment is noted and I know my staff are listening. I would have assumed that would be the case anyway, but we will make sure that is the case. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing me again. (interpretation ends) I would just like a rundown and I won't be long.

When there are people travelling from out of the territory coming in and arriving into, for example, Iqaluit, some of the passengers or the essential workers are asked to go to a different area and asked various questions. I have heard that some of the passengers, more of the passengers are the essential ones, essential workers, and less are the medical travellers. What are the protocols in terms of what are they allowed to do when they go into the territory? Who is monitoring them and, if they are not monitored, what penalty is in place if they are not following the

procedures or guidelines they are supposed to follow? (interpretation)
Thank you. That's all.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The whole reason for that separation is because there are different questions that are going to be asked.

If you're a critical worker that has come off the plane, you have to follow those conditions that I outlined earlier of having to check in with your supervisor every day, report any symptoms, wear a mask when at work or outside of where you're staying, and limit any shopping, any other outside of work. Basically you're supposed to go to work to home, work to home. I believe there is one caveat in there is that if you can't find delivery services, you're allowed to go to the store once a week for the first two weeks. Those conditions are put on the critical workers as they come into the territory.

People who are a part of the general public or medical travel or general public travel, they have gone through the isolation protocol. Once they're in the territory, they can go wherever and however they want within the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you for explaining that very clearly. People who didn't go through isolation hubs can just go into the community and not have rules to follow. You said that there are penalties that they would have

to pay if they did not follow the rules. Now, what measures do you have in place to make sure that they follow the protocols? Thank you. That's my last question.

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

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's the other challenge. We don't have enough resources to have somebody follow around everyone that comes off the plane. There is a responsibility from the employer as well, but we don't want to punish; we want to educate. If it comes down to where people are flagrantly abusing or disregarding the protocols, there are a number of different steps, including personally financial fines. With our new *Public Health Act*, I think they're \$100,000 we can fine somebody up to.

The first recourse is obviously education, but if people continue to be flagrantly abusive of the isolation, we could even go down, like I mentioned earlier, as far as restricting companies of bringing workers in, that it could jeopardize the viability of their business. It's in the best of the employers to make sure that their employees are following the rules; there are quite stringent penalties if they don't. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickee. Ms. Nakashuk, you're good? Okay. Thank you. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll state what it indicates here in English. (interpretation ends) On May 21 the FMB approved the initial negotiated contract with QC,

which was \$1.26 million and included eight positions. I am assuming that these eight positions are guest services coordinators. I guess the GN is looking for support to bring on 10 guest services coordinators. Can you clarify these two for me, please? Thank you.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have the information here somewhere, but I believe Deputy Minister Brown has it more readily available than I do with the details, through you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brown.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman. Regarding the additional QC guest services coordinators, we have learned from the initial contract that we had that more staff are required to be able to manage the hubs. As a result of that, we're adding three in Ottawa in one hub, three in another hub in Ottawa, three in the Winnipeg hub, and one in Edmonton. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Brown. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To turn the page, it states that the coordinators would help people going into the isolation hubs so that they understand the things they have to sign. Is that the only thing that they do? People going into isolation hubs and medical escorts would need to sign an agreement. The coordinators need to make sure they understand the agreement they're signing.

As an example, I went through the isolation hub when I was a medical escort. In the room the notices were all in English, there was nothing in Inuktitut, and they were talking about COVID-19 on those notices. Is it okay with your department if they're not translated into Inuktitut? That's why I'm asking this. The coordinators are there to help the guests understand what they're agreeing to. Is it okay for the notices in the rooms to not be in Inuktitut? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do apologize for how long it has taken, but those documents are in the process of being translated. There has been a real backlog with translations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Kaernerik. Sorry. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the last part it states that there's an estimate per week, \$20,120, \$80,500 for the month, and \$500,000 for six months. Can the minister clarify if these numbers are adequate, too small, or if they need to increase those numbers? Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's my final question. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry. If the member could just specify which document he is looking at. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm looking at the briefing notes that we got, Mr. Chairman. On page 15 of the briefing notes for MLAs it goes on to say that "It is estimated that the weekly cost is \$20,120, the monthly cost is \$80,500, and a six-month term is \$500,000." Are these estimated costs too small or perfect or you need some more dollars? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you for the clarification. With the discussions with the Qikiqtaaluk Corporation, those estimates are based upon the contract that we have negotiated. Now, they did come back at one point with the additional request for \$500,000 to provide more staffing. It will continue to be evaluated whether those staffing needs are sufficient to continue to provide the support under the conditions of the contract. If at some point the need goes up or down, then we would adjust accordingly. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. I still have a couple names on my list, so we're going to stop for a quick five-minute break. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 12:05 and resumed at 12:10

Chairman: Thank you. I call the committee meeting back to order. We are still on page 6 with the Department of Health. The next name on my list is Mr. Kaerner.

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I'll try to keep my questions brief because my stomach is growling.

Mr. Chairman, looking at the background of our briefing notes, as of July 2020, there were 2,515 individuals who successfully completed the isolation. Does the department have statistics for those numbers as of today of how many of those individuals completed the isolation as of today? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe Ms. Brown has some numbers right in front of her. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brown.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman. As of September 21, there were 5,576 travellers through the isolation hubs and that includes the medical travellers and the general public. It does not include the construction workers. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Kaerner.

Mr. Kaerner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the information. Of those individuals that you just mentioned, were there any applications put in for exemptions for special circumstances, such as if they have lost a loved one? Have there been special circumstances put into place with exemptions that have to be used? Are they included when it comes to family loss? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under certain conditions and criteria it has happened and probably will continue to happen, but those numbers wouldn't be included in the isolation hub numbers because they wouldn't have gone through the isolation. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Kaernek.

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for that clarification. (interpretation ends) The department is anticipating the increase of travellers going down to Ottawa and Edmonton, for those medical travellers too, not including these private travellers. It's anticipated that this travel will be increased. I'm wondering: if those increases happen and the pandemic is more on the rise and the flu season is up in the air now, will there be additional isolation?

I mean, if there's a pandemic rise happening in Ottawa and these exemptions are happening, how will these be tracked in terms of the worst case scenario? Thinking of the worst case scenario, if it ever comes to Nunavut, for instance, in the smaller communities where there are not a whole lot of resources, how would the department be anticipating and planning how to keep them isolated in the smaller communities? Is that also in consideration too? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's where, through the application process, when somebody does apply for that isolation exemption,

there are criteria associated with it, including your travel over the last three weeks.

One of the reasons we have been denying people is if they are travelling from a current hotspot. I know the GTA, the Greater Toronto Area, for a period of time was a hot spot and we were denying people who had travelled there within the last three weeks, as an example.

Each case is monitored case by case. Even with the bereavement or with the sympathy exemptions, there are still conditions associated with them. No matter what the circumstances are, if the risk is too high, you will have to go through the isolation to make sure that it is safe for Nunavummiut. Thank you.

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

Mr. Kaernek: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Have any of the patients been isolating in the capital here in Nunavut? If so, are there any numbers? I'm really hoping there is nothing because we have no isolation hub here in Nunavut. Has anyone put themselves in isolation in the capital? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We do not have an isolation hub here, as the members well know. The only circumstance I could potentially even think of is if somebody was on some type of a bereavement travel and had to spend a couple of days here in Iqaluit on the way to their community to make sure that there are some strict circumstances. They would

probably have to stay in a hotel because they still have to follow the similar conditions as a critical worker, so that would be maintaining distance from people. It would not be recommended for them to stay with family on a layover on their way to whatever community they were going to. They would probably stay in a hotel under those strict circumstances that a critical worker would be travelling under. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Kaerner.

Mr. Kaerner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for that information. I would like to applaud the Department of Health for keeping us safe while this pandemic is happening. I would just like to applaud that. Due to the fact that there will be guest services down in the isolation hubs, probably three, in Edmonton and Ottawa, are these guest services coming in from Nunavut too when it comes to essential travel? Are they coming in from Nunavut or are they hired down south? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know. QC, or Qikiqtaaluk Corporation, is filling those positions. Some of them may be people from Nunavut; some may be Inuit who are living in the south. I don't know the exact dynamics of the staffing of the Qikiqtaaluk Corporation's contract. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Kaerner.

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I said, I will keep it as brief as possible.

(interpretation ends) Is the department also considering that even though the pandemic is on the rise down south, and correct me if I'm wrong, the isolation requirement might be shortened from 14 days to 7 days, is that also taken into consideration? I myself would disagree if that isolation happens to get shortened to one week, due to the fact of trying to have social distancing and getting into a plane, they are not actually following the social distancing, though we have to wear a mask.

How long will this 14-day isolation continue to come into play? Until December 31 or September 30? Is there a practical date? That will be my final question for today. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you Mr. Chairman. One thing we have learned from other jurisdictions' plans, when they have put dates to things, it rarely works. That's why with Nunavut's Path, we didn't put dates. We put conditions and measures under which we would base our decisions upon. As long as there are isolation hubs, there will not be a seven-day isolation. There might be testing at seven days, but it would still take two or three or potentially four days to get the results of those tests. We are examining options to potentially shorten. There are logistics that are very challenging and partner jurisdictions that we have to work with to make that work.

As well, with people within the isolation hubs not practising the social distancing, it puts an added risk involved. It is up to us; it's up to the people. I don't mean us as legislators; I mean us as Nunavummiut. It's up to us and our daily practices on how we can make different measures or shorten days or lesson some of the measures in place. It is up to everyone in the territory to adhere to the rules and the recommendations that public health provides.

Until those measures are met to a satisfactory level, we are going to be in a 14-day isolation hub period for the indefinite future. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. I now have three more names on my list and I will not be adding any more. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I like to think ahead and be very proactive wherever possible. Now, from what has been happening since COVID started, all firms that provide a service of some sort will be looking and studying any new rules, and I'm assuming that there will be new regulations created because of COVID so that they can adhere to the rules and regulations to provide a specific service.

I am wondering if the government is planning ahead to put out a tender to provide meals and security services. It could be a full public tender, invitational tender, what have you, and from that create standing offer agreements with a pool of service providers which in turn will help sharpen their pencils. The second wave is starting, so I am assuming it's not to end anytime soon.

We are looking at 2021, from January to September 2021. If we can somehow save a million dollars altogether from doing tenders, that will be an extra million dollars for Baker Lake; no, for Nunavut.

That is my question, Mr. Chairman. I am wondering what the plan is. Are there going to be tenders? Are there going to be new ways to save more money in sight of this pandemic? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you for the question. You are getting beyond the scope of this bill here today, but I will allow the question for now. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member. It kind of ties into what Mr. Kusugak was saying earlier that they will continue to evaluate different options or different opportunities through the contract and procurement process. They are going to continue to follow and adjust as needed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing me once again. The minister identified that when there is a loss in the community, the situation might mean having to stay at a hotel; and in Iqaluit there are three hotels: Discovery, Capital Suites, and Frobisher Inn. Have you had any negotiations with the hotels locally in Iqaluit about the possibility of having to be in an isolation hub? When you're in an isolation hub, you have to monitor. You need someone to also monitor to ensure they're following the rules that you have set in place. You need to

monitor them 24 hours a day, so there are also security guards 24 hours a day.

When there's a loss in the community and they have to return home and they have to stay at the hotel, as per the set-up at the isolation hubs, are you going to also provide the same type of services, for example, meals, if they want to step out for a smoke break, and ensure they're not going to go past the area identified for that? That's what I would like to find out. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickeys.

Hon. George Hickeys: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The only time there was any discussion with any Nunavut hotel was when we were, again, I mentioned it a couple of times, very preliminarily looking at a hub to deal with the medical travel backlog in Winnipeg. As it turned out, we were able to open up another hub in Winnipeg, so we didn't go any further with our discussions with the hotel and security and all that here.

When you're talking about people travelling on that exemption due to bereavement or sympathy, they have to follow the same conditions that a critical worker has to adhere to. It's to self-monitor. I'll use an example. If I was down south and a member of my immediate family passed away and I needed to get home and if my travel history and the other conditions that I was travelling under made it through the cut, to say, to the chief public health office and their team to allow me to bypass the 14-day isolation hub, then I'm on my own.

What I was saying earlier is if I lived in Pond Inlet and there was no flight until tomorrow and I had to be in Iqaluit overnight, it would be strongly recommended not to stay with family, where you get a hotel room, but that would be on my own expense as a normal part of my travel. It wouldn't be government funded. There wouldn't be security. You would have to adhere to the guidelines as established for critical workers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those who have to go back home in the Baffin region because of a loss, they tend to go to the boarding home when they experience a loss. They are the ones from the Baffin region. They also stay at the boarding home. Often the case is they have to stay overnight here or however long and spend their own funds.

However, as you know, money is limited in many people's pockets and often they cannot stay at a hotel. Have you been able to consider this factor that the income is limited? Has the health department given any consideration or can give some consideration to those who might not be able to afford it at their own expense to stay at these isolation hubs? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickeys.

Hon. George Hickeys: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We don't charge anything for the isolation hubs. All food and everything are covered. That's why we're sitting here today because we paid

for it all. If somebody was travelling through the territory, if they're on medical travel, they would have been through the isolation hub, if there's room at the Tammaativvik here or any other boarding home, they would be entitled to stay there as part of their medical travel or alternatively a hotel, but we don't charge people for that, so it wouldn't be a matter of income. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You had mentioned that somebody who might go home to Pond Inlet, for example, they cannot go directly to Pond Inlet because of a delay in weather, because they have gotten home because of a loss of a family member. Maybe which community their flights cannot go directly to them and then they have to overnight in a hotel. That's what I'm referring to. If they're coming from Ottawa and they're trying to get to another community but they have to overnight, I'll leave it at that.

I'll also talk about people who go to hospital, medical stay, those that followed and were escorts. Sometimes the staff give up on the escorts and then they get sent home, but then they also have to be... . How do you handle those people if they might have COVID or not? Let me ask that final question, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Unless an exemption is applied for and approved, every person goes through the 14-day isolation. I read the bullets earlier, but I'll just take one

last comment. One of the things in the application process to provide for an exemption is the measures that will be taken by the employee or, in this case, an exempted traveller to self-isolate outside of work hours or on that travel. In your application process, if you couldn't define a way that you were going to remain isolated to return into Nunavut and bypass the isolation, you would not be approved. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Main, I'll give you a chance to ask a couple of more questions. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I have three and they're short. I would like to put forward an argument within the public of Nunavut in this. I would like the minister to tell me why it's wrong.

The first argument is that Nunavut doesn't need isolation hubs at all. All we have to do is test everybody getting on the plane and then we would be safe from COVID-19. I wonder if the minister could explain the holes in that thinking. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This topic has come up numerous times and I appreciate the member asking it because it gives us an opportunity to really stress how important testing capacity is, but also how COVID-19 works. If I were to come in contact with COVID-19 a week ago, I could potentially be a symptomatic or even asymptomatic carrier. That first seven to ten days are

some of the most risky from the majority of the population that contract COVID-19. Outside of that, that's why the isolation period is the 14 days.

Very rarely does COVID-19...I can't even think of the word...come into force within your body outside that 14-day period. If you were getting on a plane today and you came into contact with COVID-19 two days ago, you would still test negative because it's not through your body yet; it hasn't had a chance to grow within your body, but you could be home for three days and you got tested, it got negative, "I'm free and clear. I can go home. I can go visit my mom. I can go visit my brother. I can go hang out with some friends. I can go cruise around with my friends."

Meanwhile, in that three-day period, you have become infectious and everyone you have come into contact with has the potential to get COVID-19. That's the scary part. That is why this 14-day isolation period is so critical to our path going forward to maintain COVID-19 not entering the territory or at least being able to control it if it does. That's why those conditions for critical workers is you go to work, you go home, so that any contact tracing that needs to be done would be quite simple.

The whole goal of this whole scenario is to one, keep it out for as long as we can, but when and if it does come in, to be able to control it. Those are the measures, those are the safe distancing, to make sure that you're wearing a mask where you can't maintain social distancing, to not interact in large groups of people, to make sure that we are being conscientious of whom we are exposing

COVID-19 to. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickey. I know Mr. Main, you were keeping your questions short, but the minister is keeping his answers long. Mr. Main.

>>*Laughter*

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I'll keep this question short as well. It is important to ask these because we are relying on the public to believe in the need for these isolation hubs. I think if we start having mass disobedience or rebellion, I think we would be in serious trouble.

The second argument that is put forward is this: I went through 14-day isolation, for example, and then I get on a plane to fly home and I'm on the plane with somebody wearing a mask; we're all wearing masks, and the person on the plane with me did not go through isolation. Therefore my 14-day isolation was meaningless.

I wonder if the minister can explain why that argument is wrong. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickey.

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have been working very closely with the airlines for the trips from the south to the north to keep the critical workers separated. That being said, from the latest discussion that I have had with Dr. Patterson, there is still no confirmed case of transmission on an airplane in Canada.

With the measures that have taken place with the sanitary measures the airlines are taking, and with the mask wearing and with the personal hygiene, you could be sitting next to somebody with COVID-19, but if you guys are practising your safe hygiene and wearing a mask, still the risk of contamination is quite low. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Mr. Main, your final question.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) My final question is the one that we as legislators have to face when we are looking at this incredible expense. Maybe the minister won't be able to give me a straight answer on it, so I will ask for perspective or his view.

In the minister's view, has this isolation hub operation and will this isolation hub operation save lives? When we're looking at the potential impacts of COVID-19, if it had entered Nunavut in the months past or if it could in the months to come, has this...? I guess I'm trying to reconcile or asking the minister to reconcile the incredible expense with the incredible threat of it entering into our communities. I'm asking for his perspective on the matter.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll do my best to keep this brief. I absolutely, yes, I believe it has already saved lives. The question has been raised as to how many cases have we caught in the isolation hubs and the

fact is it's zero right now that we know of. And that's the problem with COVID-19 is there are so many people that carry it that are asymptomatic, that don't even know they have it, that is where that 14-day isolation process, even if you had COVID-19 and didn't know it, after 14 days it would be gone or you would be sick. It absolutely, I do believe it has saved lives in Nunavut and will continue to save lives. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. I'm going to cut off the debate at this time. If members still have questions there are still other opportunities you can ask questions, you can go directly to the ministers, or you can ask questions in the Assembly, written questions, or write letters. However you see fit, if you do have further questions.

We are on page 6. Department of Health. Special Warrants and Not Previously Authorized. \$31,347,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Go back to page 2. Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) No. 1, 2020-2021. Schedule 1: Operations and Maintenance. Operations and Maintenance Appropriation. \$52,130,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. I now ask members to go to Bill 46 in your legislative binder.

Thank you. Bill 46, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2020-2021*. Clause 1. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Clause 2. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Clause 3. Go to Schedule on page 3. Schedule. Vote 1: Operations and Maintenance. Total Supplementary Appropriation. \$52,130,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Clause 3. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Clause 4. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Clause 5. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Clause 6. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Clause 7. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Clause 8. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Do members agree to Bill 46 as a whole?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Do members agree to put Bill 46 on the orders of the day for third reading?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickey, closing comments, please.

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll keep it fairly short, but I can't give up this opportunity to put out a special thank you and I hope all members and all Nunavummiut put this "thank you" in their heads and hearts today for the people at the Department of Health and other partner departments like Community and Government Services. I can't even count the hours and the effort that was put in and the sacrifice of family time and like seven days a week, 10, 12, 14, or 16 hours a day some of these people have been working for weeks, if not months, on end.

I know Deputy Minister Brown won't appreciate this, but the work that she has done with her team and Mr. Babstock, Jen Berry with her team, Andrea McFaul with her team, Dr. de Wet at the chief of staff, the effort that they have put into this to keep us all safe and to help guide me and our cabinet and our government through this pandemic, I can't even express their entire teams, the effort and everything that they have put into helping us move this forward.

I appreciate the members' questions and scrutiny over this. I realize that these are difficult times. We're spending money before it's approved, but I still feel every dollar that went through this was justified. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>> *Applause*

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickey. On behalf of the committee, I thank you

and your staff and other ministers for being here to answer all the questions that members have, and we look forward to further developments as they come. With that, in recognition that we have completed the wish of the committee for the morning, I will now rise to report progress to the Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Good day after the morning. Item 20. (interpretation ends) Report of the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Rumbolt.

Item 20: Report of the Committee of the Whole

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 46 and would like to report that Bill 46 is immediately ready for third reading. 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 is a motion on the floor. Is there a seconder? Mr. Simailak seconds the motion.

>> *Applause*

The motion is in order. To the motion.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Speaker (interpretation): All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried.

Thank you. Item 21. Third Reading of Bills. (interpretation ends) Minister of Finance, Minister Hickes.

Item 21: Third Reading of Bills

Bill 46 – Supplementary Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2020-2021 – Third Reading

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll remember to stand today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Arviat South, that Bill 46, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2020-2021*, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Speaker: All those in favour. Opposed. I see none, so the motion is carried and Bill 46 is ready for assent.

(interpretation) No. 22. (interpretation ends) *Orders of the Day*. Mr. Clerk.

Item 22: Orders of the Day

Clerk (Mr. Quirke): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a reminder that the Standing Committee on Legislation will meet at two o'clock in the Nanuq Boardroom.

Orders of the Day for September 28:

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. Petitions
11. Responses to Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motions
15. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
 - Motion 85 – 5(2)
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 44
 - Bill 48
 - Bill 50
 - Tabled Document 65 – 5(2)
20. Report of the Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
22. Orders of the Day

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) This House stands adjourned until Monday, September 28, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

(interpretation) Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House adjourned at 12:48*

Thank you.

>>*Applause*

