

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

Speaker

Hon. Paul Quassa
(Aggu)

Hon. David Akeegok
(Quttiktuq)

*Deputy Premier; Minister of Economic
Development and Transportation; Minister
of Human Resources*

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(Amittuq)

Pauloosie Keyootak
(Uqqummiut)

David Qamaniq
(Tununiq)

Emiliano Qirngnuq
(Netsilik)

Tony Akoak
(Gjoa Haven)

Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole

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(Rankin Inlet South)

*Minister of Health; Minister
responsible for Seniors; Minister
responsible for Suicide Prevention*

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(Hudson Bay)

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(Iqaluit-Niaqunnguu)

Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole

Adam Lightstone
(Iqaluit-Manirajak)

Hon. Joe Savikataaq
(Arviat South)

*Premier; Minister of Executive and
Intergovernmental Affairs; Minister of
Energy; Minister of Environment;
Minister responsible for Immigration;
Minister responsible for Indigenous
Affairs; Minister responsible for the
Utility Rates Review Council*

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak
(Cambridge Bay)

*Minister of Community and Government
Services; Minister responsible for the Qulliq
Energy Corporation*

John Main
(Arviat North-Whale Cove)

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk
(Pangnirtung)
*Minister of Culture and Heritage;
Minister of Languages; Minister
responsible for the Nunavut Housing
Corporation*

Craig Simailak
(Baker Lake)

Hon. George Hickee
(Iqaluit-Tasiluk)

*Minister of Finance, Chair of the Financial
Management Board; Minister of Justice;
Minister responsible for Labour; Minister
responsible for the Workers' Safety and
Compensation Commission*

Patterk Netser
(Aivilik)

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik
(Iqaluit-Sinaa)
*Government House Leader; Minister
of Family Services; Minister
responsible for Homelessness; Minister
responsible for the Status of Women*

Hon. David Joanasic
(South Baffin)

*Minister of Education; Minister responsible
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Michael Chandler

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Michel Albert

Hansard Production
Innirvik Support Services

Box 1200

Iqaluit, Nunavut, X0A 0H0

Tel (867) 975-5000 Fax (867) 975-5190 Toll-Free (877) 334-7266

Website: www.assembly.nu.ca

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Iqaluit, Nunavut
Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Members Present:

Hon. David Akeegok, Mr. Tony Akoak, Ms. Pat Angnakak, Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak, Hon. George Hickes, Hon. David Joanasie, Mr. Joeline Kaerner, Hon. Lorne Kusugak, Mr. Adam Lightstone, Mr. John Main, Hon. Margaret Nakashuk, Mr. Patterk Netser, Mr. Calvin Pedersen, Mr. David Qamaniq, Mr. Emiliano Qirngnuq, Hon. Paul Quassa, Mr. Allan Rumbolt, Hon. Joe Savikataaq, Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik, Mr. Craig Simailak, Ms. Cathy Towtongie.

>>*House commenced at 10:00*

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Paul Quassa)(interpretation): Good morning. Before we proceed, let us pray.

>>*Prayer*

Speaker (interpretation): Good morning, Nunavummiut and those who are following the proceedings. We are reconvening this morning, so let's proceed. Ministers' Statements. Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Savikataaq.

Item 2: Ministers' Statements

Minister's Statement 595 – 5(2): Government Liaison Office Relocation in Sanikiluaq

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the people of Arviat, I say "good morning" to you while you're experiencing cold temperatures over there.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I rise today with good news regarding the delivery of the Government Liaison Officer program in Sanikiluaq.

Our Government Liaison Officer program ensures local access to the Government of Nunavut's various programs and services, provides coordination at the local level for intergovernmental initiatives, and serves as a reliable source of information for our communities.

Mr. Speaker, the Hamlet of Sanikiluaq's government offices experienced serious damage from severe weather in September 2020. As you know, Mr. Speaker, it is challenging to work through unpredictable situations like this, especially with the limitations the COVID-19 pandemic has created.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that a temporary location at the Almiq Construction Camp has been identified in Sanikiluaq, thanks to the work of the Department of Community and Government Services.

While this is a temporary solution, housing the GLO office here is a positive step forward. This ensures that the much-needed delivery of the program in the community can continue until a permanent office space is confirmed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Hamlet of Sanikiluaq and the community for all their resilience and patience, and their MLA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Ministers' Statements. Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Minister's Statement 596 – 5(2): Nunavut Law Program Gale Moot Competition

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to mark an exciting accomplishment by a group of Nunavut Law Program students.

Mr. Speaker and members, the Gale Cup Moot is a criminal-law moot court competition focused on court of appeal advocacy. The Gale Cup Moot has occurred every year since 1974 and involves competing law schools from across Canada. This year a team from the Nunavut Law Program competed against teams from 19 other Canadian law schools. Mr. Speaker and members, the moot was held remotely over the last week of February 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to share that in the face of steep competition from the University of Toronto, Université de Montréal, McGill, Dalhousie, University of British Columbia, Queen's, and other schools, the Nunavut Law Program team of Jasmine Redfern, Pascal McLennan, Andrew Morrison, and Jessica Shabtai came in first place for their factum and won the prize for best overall written submission at the Moot.

>>Applause

Mr. Speaker and members, the Nunavut team beat some of the best law students from the best law schools in the country with their written advocacy, demonstrating both the strength of their legal skills and the quality of our homemade law program here in Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker and members, the Nunavut Law Program students also received very high praise on their oral advocacy from the judges who sat on their panel. Justice Jamie Campbell from the Nova Scotia Supreme Court singled out Nunavut student Jasmine Redfern for her excellent oral advocacy skills and stated that she "uses words like hand grenades."

>> *Laughter*

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Nunavut Law Program team for this amazing accomplishment. The students of the Nunavut Law Program are set to graduate this spring and I am excited for their many future accomplishments to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. We are proud of our fellow Nunavummiut when they have such major accomplishments. Ministers' Statements. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Minister's Statement 597 – 5(2): Nursing Scholarship for Students at Nunavut Arctic College

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) The Department of Health continues to encourage and support Nunavummiut to pursue careers in nursing. Part of our strategy toward achieving that goal is through bursaries for nursing students at Nunavut Arctic College to encourage program completion and provide educational incentives.

Mr. Speaker, each year the Department of Health supports Nunavut's hard-working nursing students with a Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship. Each year six scholarship awards of \$3,000 are available to top nursing students.

Mr. Speaker, this year I am pleased to announce I was able to hand out all six scholarships during a ceremony yesterday here in Iqaluit.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative supports the growth of Nunavut-based health care professionals and aims to strengthen the participation of beneficiaries.

Mr. Speaker, once again I want to congratulate Vayda Kaviok and Nicole Boland from year two, Angnaluaaq Friessen and Bukola Dimeji from year three, Jena Merkosak and Amy Clark from year four. I am sure they will make excellent nurses after they graduate.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health is committed to educating and graduating more Nunavummiut nurses and initiatives such as this scholarship shows how the Department of Health supports and strengthens participation of Nunavut-based workforce. Currently there are four Nunavut Inuit in the Pre-Health Program and five in the Nursing Program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Ministers' Statements. Minister of Family Services, Ms. Sheutiapik.

Minister's Statement 598 – 5(2): Client Liaison Officers

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to you and all Nunavummiut.

(interpretation ends) *Uqaqtitsijii*, I would like to acknowledge the significant role of Family Services' client liaison officers. These two positions, which are filled by Inuit, are based in Ottawa and Edmonton. Currently there are 96 clients in the Ottawa region and 76 clients in the Edmonton region. Client liaison officers work very closely with community partners in southern Canada and most importantly provide direct culturally relevant support to Nunavut clients receiving residential care in southern Canada.

It is especially appreciated by clients when a client liaison officer assists them with transitioning from Nunavut or when a client receives a visit from a client liaison officer while going through a difficult time.

Client liaison officers meet with clients and connect them to cultural supports and Inuit-serving organizations. They also conduct annual residential site and client reviews, which contribute to ensuring the highest quality of care is being delivered to Nunavummiut.

Uqaqtitsijii, one of the priorities of the department is the repatriation of Nunavummiut back to Nunavut. The client liaison officers contribute to this end goal by participating in case conferences with others on the Permanency Planning Review Committee.

The Department of Family Services wishes to take this opportunity to recognize and to offer our sincere appreciation to our client liaison officers. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Ministers' Statements. Minister of Community and Government Services, Ms. Ehaloak.

Minister's Statement 599 – 5(2): Inuit Employment and Training

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Good morning to my colleagues and those that are watching.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Community and Government Services is committed to increasing Inuit employment and training and achieving the objectives of Article 23 of the *Nunavut Agreement*.

The department completed 31 direct appointments of Inuit employees in alignment with the department's Inuit employment plan. In addition, Community and Government Services has demonstrated its commitment to training and developing Inuit employees as

outlined in *Turaaqtavut*. By using career laddering and succession planning, the department has advanced nine Inuit employees into senior roles.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the department is continuously looking for opportunities to increase Inuit employment by working with each division to identify potential career laddering options, training possibilities, and promoting Inuit throughout the department.

As part of our commitment to developing a representative workforce, the Department of Community and Government Services is driven and determined to achieving our Inuit employment goals. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Ministers' Statements. (interpretation ends) Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, Mr. Hickes.

Minister's Statement 600 – 5(2): Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission 2021 Corporate Plan

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to bring to the Assembly's attention the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission's 2021 Corporate Plan that is now available on the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission's website at www.wscc.nu.ca.

Mr. Speaker and members, the corporate plan sets out the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission's priorities and reports on progress towards achieving them. Mr. Speaker and members, as part of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission's commitment to transparency and accountability, any changes or shifts in direction are highlighted and published in the corporate plan every year. This year specific accountabilities have been identified and more defined targets have also been added to the document to provide more information on tracking performance.

Mr. Speaker, although we cannot yet know the full impact this global pandemic will continue to have on future plans, the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission is confident that the work laid out in the 2021 corporate plan is achievable. The pandemic has led to increased awareness of the importance of working together to keep workplaces safe and healthy. This has allowed the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, working in partnership with employers, to make some unexpected progress towards advancing the safety culture in workplaces across our communities.

I invite all Members of the Assembly to visit the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission's website, again, at wscc.nu.ca to learn more about the exciting work they are undertaking this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Ministers' Statements. I have no more names on my list. Continuing on. Members' Statements. Member for Baker Lake, Mr. Simailak.

Item 3: Members' Statements

Member's Statement 850 – 5(2): Baker Lake Men's Group

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, all. To the people of Baker Lake, good morning and I hope you have a wonderful day.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in appreciation of a relatively new group in Baker Lake. The Baker Lake Men's Group was formed in the spring of 2018. They also became a registered society later that year in the month of October. There are six board members:

- Basil Quinangnaq
- Harold Putumiraqtuq
- Charlie Tautuaqjuk
- Lars Qaqqaq
- Jamie Kataluk
- Justin Jenkins

Mr. Speaker, the men's group has had great support from various agencies as well, such as the Department of Justice, social development, the Embrace Life Council, the Department of Health, Quality of Life, and the culture and heritage department.

To date the group has held many meetings and have also gone out to the land with men and young men as a way to help heal and strengthen mental health. They have also helped and provided equipment and hunting gear to use during the outing if an individual didn't have the necessary needs for the outing.

Mr. Speaker, with the assistance of other people in the community the group has done some programs aside from their board meetings and they are:

- They took ten high school students on an on-the-land trip
- Men without hunting supplies out on an on-the-land trip
- Children referred to by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on an on-the-land trip by boat
- Widows out on an on-the-land trip
- Qamutik making
- Men out on an on-the-land trip program to Pitts Lake, that is quite a ways away
- They also had a guest speaker on family violence a lawyer named Alan Regal

Mr. Speaker, ever since this group was formed and began trying to help people, there has been one constant that they have been incorporating into their activities. It is the importance of having good mental health; that it is okay to reach out and ask for help. We

must end this stigma that men must put up a shield; that men must bottle things up. That does not do any good.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I like to mention the six men that are in the group and running it all have day jobs and they are doing this work for the community in the...

Speaker (interpretation): I apologize. Please keep an eye on your time. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I would like to conclude my statement. Thank you. For the permission of my colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Please note your time. The member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Please proceed, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues.

Lastly I would like to mention again that the six men that are in the group and running it all have day jobs and they are doing this work for the community in the evenings and weekends. I ask my fellow colleagues to please help me and applaud the initiative of this fine group. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. We always are mindful of such individuals. Members' Statements. Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa, Ms. Sheutiapik.

Member's Statement 851 – 5(2): Showcasing Anita Issaluk

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I literally have the world around my neck. I am proud to showcase Anita Issaluk from Mittimatalik originally living south. The stone, believe it or not, is from Brazil, the shell and turquoise is from Mexico, the red and black are from South Africa and the hide is from the Moose Clan in Canada.

As an artist she has traded caribou antlers, baleen, ivory from all over the world and created this beautiful piece and she had titled it Leadership Like Uluk. She had gifted me while I was President of Pauktuutit. We have many talented people. So I just wanted to showcase. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. It is beautiful. Members' Statements. Member for Iqaluit-Tasiluk, Mr. Hickes.

Member's Statement 852 – 5(2): MusiCounts Teacher of the Year

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about the 2021 MusiCounts Teacher of the Year award. This award is presented by the Canadian Scholarship Trust Foundation and it is intended to recognize an inspirational and passionate Canadian music educator's impact not only on students, but on their community and the music education field.

Mr. Speaker, I can't think of a more deserving nominee than our own Dr. Mary Piercey-Lewis. Mr. Speaker, the past 12 months have demonstrated how essential music education is for our youth. Although I congratulate all nominees, I wish Mary the best of luck.

Mr. Speaker, the winner of the award will be announced live at this year's 50th Juno Awards on May 16. Please join me in congratulating Mary on her nomination and providing our best wishes for her to be selected as the MusiCounts Teacher of the Year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. I personally have some short comments to make here as well.

I am quite proud that Igloolik resident, Terry Uyarak, a musician, has also been nominated for a JUNO Award. He is a resident of Igloolik, a musician, and also a dog team owner.

>>Applause

Members' Statements. I have no more names on my list. Let us proceed. Returns to Oral Questions. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Oral Questions. Member for Aivilik, Mr. Netser.

Item 6: Oral Questions**Question 1237 – 5(2): Surplus Disposal Policy**

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to wish the residents of Coral Harbour and Naujaat a good day. The days are getting longer in our area obviously, as it snows here today.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Community and Government Services. The Department of Community and Government Services is responsible for administering the government's Surplus Disposal Policy; this policy right here.

This policy addresses how the government disposes of fixed assets and mobile equipment. It has recently come to my attention that there are a number of pieces of heavy equipment at the Coral Harbour airport that has not been used for many years now, and it's my understanding that there is interest on part of the municipality and private businesses in acquiring the equipment.

Will the minister commit to working with the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation to move forward in surplusizing these pieces of equipment? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Community and Government Services, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for his question. Community and Government Services does prepare a master list of all Government of Nunavut assets broken down by department and community and circulates them to other departments for their information. I can say that I can work with the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism to review this list the member is talking about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister is aware, the sunset date of the government's Surplus Disposal Policy was March 31, 2020. That was last year.

Can the minister indicate if the policy is currently being reviewed, and can she describe what specific changes to the policy are being considered? (interpretation) Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Community and Government Services, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) The policy is reviewed and updated with input from other departments to ensure that the policy assists other departments to ensure that the policy itself is current and what changes or suggestions from the other departments might be included when rewriting the policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I asked my first question, the minister responded that the Department of Economic Development and Transportation would be partnering with their department to deal with my question.

Now, Coral Harbour has a very long road leading to the airport and we constantly have to maintain the road, and every summer maintenance work is performed on the length of

this road. There are several businesses assisting the hamlet to maintain this road, and the airport equipment has not been offered, although it would have helped ease the work for the private businesses or maintenance crews.

I wonder if the minister can deem this as an urgent matter, as summer is just around the corner already and only a few months remain before temperatures rise, if there is any way for the department to offer this equipment to the hamlet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister responsible for Community and Government Services, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I will ask my colleague to review the information and get back to the member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Question 1238 – 5(2): COVID-19 Variants

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Health.

Now, as an MLA, one must always try to envision the future, and perhaps this applies to the role of the minister as well. Today, in looking at the current situation we are dealing with, we must nonetheless also try to prepare for the upcoming months and the kinds of initiatives we may have to implement as that is part of our role.

Mr. Speaker, there are COVID-19 measures in place, however, there are what are being branded as (interpretation ends) variants (interpretation) in English, and in listening to the news, more stories about these variants are occupying the news as we discuss the pandemic effects and the mutation of this virus.

Also, these variants of this COVID-19 are mutations that have just been discovered and we already have a few cases within Canada. My first question for the minister relates to the plans on the pandemic measures in place for (interpretation ends) Nunavut's path (interpretation) or the direction for Nunavut. Have any amendments been made to deal with these variants of COVID-19 within our pandemic plan? How much emphasis has been placed on these different variant strains within your plans? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Good morning. Thank you for the question, my colleague. The team that was set up during the COVID-19 pandemic by the Department of Health meets daily and our Chief Medical Officer is constantly in discussions with his counterparts across Canada. As ministers we also meet to discuss medical issues.

COVID-19 is constantly being discussed and I am pleased that the variant has not arrived in Nunavut, but with respect to what actions are being taken in terms of different strains in southern Canada, we are very much part of the sharing of information and how this information will be used to change our plan so we are constantly deliberating on how to deal with the different strains if they arrived into Nunavut at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister. Now, with respect to the testing equipment, such as the nasal swabs used for the rapid testing is what I want to ask about here. What types of swabs are used for this COVID-19 rapid testing and can they also identify the different strains if they exist here in Nunavut?

(interpretation ends) My question is: what proportion of the nasal swabs or tests done in Nunavut are analyzed for variants or as to whether the variants are inside Nunavut or have been detected here? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the information I was provided, the testing in Nunavut looks at whether COVID-19 or any of the variants are in the sample tested and whether the strains are starting to mutate.

Mr. Speaker, all these variants are checked to determine if it is COVID-19 or one of the variants, so all of these variants are also included in the testing process. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, with the new variant strains of COVID-19, unfortunately I have no idea what to use as terminology in Inuktitut, but I am talking about the (interpretation ends) variants (interpretation) and perhaps it can be a reminder for residents of the urgency of getting vaccinated.

Based on what I understand, the vaccines used to fight against the COVID-19 virus also assist in lessening the impacts, nonetheless, the new variants are showing that although this vaccine does help, it may not be as effective but it definitely provides protection against all these strains.

(interpretation ends) Does the minister agree that the threat of variants should serve to further remind Nunavummiut how important it is to get vaccinated? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We want to reach the stage where all residents are vaccinated, and the vaccine is able to deal with the effects of COVID-19 or the variant strains as it assists the body to fight off the virus.

And every day, researchers and doctors are also looking at the vaccines as well as the new variants to determine if we need to increase the effectiveness of the vaccine or if we need separate vaccines for these strains based on the actual vaccine we are using. They are looking to improve that vaccine.

Yes, once you get vaccinated, the first shot assists in resisting the virus and if improvements are made to the existing vaccine, your previous vaccination would still help to resist this virus. At this time, in Nunavut, we do not have any cases of the variants and the cases in Nunavut are all just infected with the original strain of COVID-19.

If we are vaccinated, then yes, we do have alternate plans if the variant strains were to be discovered, but the vaccine will still ensure people have a fighting chance, and we have planned this for the upcoming months and days ahead of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towtongie.

Question 1239 – 5(2): Replacement Air Terminal Building for Chesterfield Inlet

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Transportation. I will be basing my question on Chesterfield Inlet.

For many years now, there have been no new developments in Chesterfield Inlet. In 2021 we still have to leave our suitcases outside at the airport terminal. The government is supposed to be building a new airport terminal building and I would like to get an update on where that is at. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. The minister just arrived. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we have approval for five ATBs, airport terminal buildings, and the House approved the funding for that. This particular project is covered by that funding. In regards to the five airport terminal buildings project, we will be putting them out for tender or request for proposal. We are not sure yet which way we will get those built, but we are going to be putting those RFPs out this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people of Chesterfield Inlet have very high expectations. If you arrived at the airport terminal today, you would be able to see how dangerous and old it is for elders and medical patients. Can the

minister give me an indication as to which month the work will start, and when they expect to have it completed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It will be built, but I'm just not quite sure how yet, and it will take two years. When we build big infrastructure like that, with the five projects this year, we're not sure how much money we're going to need to do all that. An RFP will be issued, and after we do that, we will know how much money it is going to take to build the five airport terminal buildings.

Whenever big buildings are being built... . It is in the second phase now. Last year, it was just planned on paper, last summer the community was visited to get an idea of what it would look like, and now they're planning the actual construction of it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister. Can we expect that this year, in 2021-22, the project will start in the middle of the fiscal year? I know that the pandemic is still a concern and that it has caused delays. After the planning has been done, even though the pandemic is still going on, will this project be on time? We don't want this to be delayed again. The people of Chesterfield Inlet don't want this to be delayed for a long time because Chesterfield Inlet has been forgotten. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When you represent a small community, it seems like we get forgotten, but as a government, we always try to remember all of them for hospitals, health centres and other big infrastructure like that. When it is that serious, it is enviable and also heartwarming to the communities that will have the infrastructure built in their hamlets. Now, through this tendering process, we don't have any idea how much the actual costs will be, until bids are submitted.

If the bids are too high and surpass the budget, then we would have to deliberate on our options. The costs may be different from the funds previously authorized in this House that were set aside for the five airport terminal buildings. There are five communities, and we have to ensure that the costs don't go past the amounts we receive from the federal government as they have provided a large amount for this project.

Further, we have also been approved by this House on the remainder of the funds for these projects, so in total, we anticipate this happening. When the tender is opened this

spring, we will try to ensure that it also allows for the shipment of materials on the sealift. All of the MLAs have approved this project, so our employees are now making it happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1240 – 5(2): Qulliq Energy Corporation Capital Plan for Gjoa Haven

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning colleagues, Nunavummiut and residents of Gjoa Haven.

My questions are for the Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation. As the minister will recall, I recently tabled correspondence in the Legislative Assembly from the Mayor of Gjoa Haven and I can pay tribute to the municipal council and its hard working employees.

Mr. Speaker, one of the priorities identified by the municipality is the need for a new power plant for the community. As the minister is aware, the Qulliq Energy Corporation's 2021-24 Corporate Plan indicates that one of its priorities for the 2021-22 fiscal year is to "Submit Major Project Permit Application for new power plants in Cambridge Bay, Igloolik and Gjoa Haven."

I'm sure the minister is in communications with her friend and colleague from Community and Government Services. Mr. Speaker, this is very good news. Can the minister provide an update on the status of this application? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for his question. I'm very proud of our Arctic Energy Fund, which is providing funding to enhance our power plants in our communities, and Gjoa Haven is slated for a new power plant in the near future.

Currently the Qulliq Energy Corporation is working on a couple of projects that have been approved through the Arctic Energy Fund and once we have all of the documentation and the required information to start on Gjoa Haven power plant, I will let the member know. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister is aware, the Qulliq Energy Corporation's 2021-24 Corporate Plan also indicates that the generator set replacement project for the Gjoa Haven power plant has been deferred until the 2021-22 fiscal year, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Can the minister provide an update today on the status of this project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Again, I thank the member for his question. Unfortunately I don't have an update as to the gen set replacements in Gjoa Haven, but the member is correct that COVID has put a strain on multiple projects within our territory. Again, like I said, once I have the information, I can relay the information to my colleague. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister is aware, the Qulliq Energy Corporation's 2021-24 corporate plan also indicates that one of its priorities for the 2021-22 fiscal year is to continue with the LED street light conversion project in six communities, including Gjoa Haven. Can the minister provide an update today on the status of this project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister responsible for Qulliq Energy Corporation, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) The LED replacement lighting, which is the light emitting diode street lighting program, Qulliq Energy Corporation anticipates that we will start in the fiscal year of 2021-22. That's after April 1, and the Qulliq Energy Corporation wants to do the work as soon as the weather warms up, and depending on COVID. We are scheduled to replace the street lights in Gjoa Haven, Coral Harbour, Whale Cove, Sanirajak, Qikiqtarjuaq and Arctic Bay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Netsilik, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Question 1241 – 5(2): Family Violence and Crime Prevention

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say "good morning" to my fellow residents of Netsilik, the people of Nunavut and my colleagues here.

(interpretation ends) My questions are for the Minister of Justice, and they concern the issue of family violence and crime prevention.

Mr. Speaker, the problem of family violence has many root causes. Substance abuse, homelessness and overcrowding are some of the factors that make this problem worse.

Can the Minister of Justice describe how he is working with the Minister responsible for Homelessness to identify initiatives to address this problem? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question, and I would like to acknowledge that it's not just the Minister responsible for Homelessness that's involved in discussions.

In April 2019, a working group was created with a justice of the peace, RCMP members, a community justice manager, community justice specialist and representatives from the Department of Family Services. The whole purpose of this working group is to review the legislation on the *Family Abuse Intervention Act* that was finalized in 2008.

They are looking at the legislation. Over the years, there have been some recognized challenges and the whole purpose of this working group is to establish consultations and feedback from interested of stakeholders; Pauktuutit, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and a number of different stakeholders have been communicated with. Right now we're collecting feedback and organizing, under COVID's reality, how these consultations will take place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order for the minister to respond properly, it will also make it clearer to understand. (interpretation ends) The minister made a statement earlier this week about the *Family Abuse Intervention Act* in which he indicated that work is now underway to review the legislation.

Can the minister commit to inviting the municipal councils of Kugaaruk and Taloyoak to make a submission to his department on this important issue? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just named a few partners and interested stakeholders, and absolutely, Mr. Speaker, my officials are listening right now and I will make sure that there is a letter sent out to all hamlets to solicit any feedback on the review of the legislation regarding the *Family Abuse Intervention Act*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The responses keep getting better.

>> *Laughter*

In the smaller communities they are always looking for solutions to address homelessness. We look at different departments on how we can provide homes.

(interpretation ends) Crime prevention is an important issue and I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Nunavummiut who are working to find solutions in this area.

As the minister is aware, the government's current *Five-Year Nunavut Crime Prevention Strategy* was introduced in 2017. Can the minister update the Legislative Assembly on the status of his department's work to update the Crime Prevention Strategy?

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The timing couldn't be better for the member to ask this question. The Crime Prevention Strategy does expire in March 2022, a year from now, so work has begun already on a review of that policy and to look at where there are gaps or any enhancements that can be offered. Again, there are a number of different parties involved in that.

If the member himself or any interested parties that are listening have any feedback that they would like to provide, I'm always open to feedback from any level of government or corporate or personal feedback on these types of issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1242 – 5(2): Nunavummi Nangminiaqtunik Ikajuuti Regulations

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Economic Development.

Earlier this sitting of the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, February 25, I gave the minister an opportunity to provide a clear explanation to the Members of this House as well as the listening public as to the reasons why the government recently made major changes to the *Nunavummi Nangminiaqtunik Ikajuuti Regulations*, the NNI Regulations.

Mr. Speaker, my questions to the minister on Thursday, February 25, concern the changes to these regulations that were approved by the government in December 2020.

Mr. Speaker, on the very next day, Friday, February 26, the government published a new set of changes to these regulations, and these changes have been approved back in January and they repealed the amendments that have been made in December.

My first question to the minister is: when I questioned the minister about this subject, why did he not inform the Legislative Assembly about the latest changes and can he now provide a clear explanation as to why these changes have been made? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our cabinet, when we initially approved the changes, there was a drafting error that had taken place and we corrected that the following next cabinet meeting, which then got published timely, the day after your question, but my intent was not to hide anything. It's just through our cabinet process that those series of events took place.

The only change that took place is that when we initially put on the cap, we had it listed that it was for Inuit companies when it should be for all companies, and that's the difference between what was published in the beginning and what was published on February 27. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for that clarification. Mr. Speaker, I fully appreciate, recognize, and understand the need to balance the objective of maximizing our scarce capital dollars with the objective of meeting Article 24 obligations.

I would like to ask: can the minister provide a clear indication of the magnitude of cost savings that these changes to the regulations are intended to achieve? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have that level of detail. I have been looking through the documents. I initially had those specific documents in terms of what level of savings that would be. For an \$80 million capital project, you're looking at about \$20 million to \$25 million. I might be wrong in terms of the actual numbers, but if I may, through correspondence, I could clearly provide in terms of the savings or the reasons why we chose to put a cap in this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I previously indicated, I fully appreciate, recognize, and understand the need to maximize our scarce capital dollars and that is quite a substantial cost savings that this amendment will potentially incorporate.

Mr. Speaker, when I had first asked the minister questions on the topic two weeks ago, the minister indicated that discussions are taking place between the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated on this issue. I would like to ask: can the minister be more specific about what these discussions are intended to achieve? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated is a very close partner when it comes to the Nunavummi Namminiqaarnimut Incentive. It is one that I cherish with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated. It also through these that we are both bounded in terms of if there are any changes that both of us need to notify each other and come up with an agreement; if not, then we need to justify.

For this particular one, they have viewed this as a substantial change when the full review that is expected and coming in 2022, the full review was being planned to start in 2022 for the Nunavut Namminiqaarnimut Ikajuuti. When we made that initial cap, they did initially have a judicial review and from what I understand, they have postponed this for now because we are having good discussions with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated in terms of seeing if we can advance the full review with them as these transpire.

That's the level of detail I have currently to report to this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1243 – 5(2): Air Transportation Sector

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation. I would like to keep him busy today again.

As everyone in this House is very much aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the airline industry.

Last fall the federal government released its latest economic update. It indicated that “to support regional air transportation, including regional air carriers, the government

proposes to provide up to \$206.0 million over two years...for a new Regional Air Transportation Initiative.”

Can the minister clarify the extent to which his department is working with Transport Canada on this new initiative? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot of work has taken place and our Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs is taking the lead as there are a number of departmental impacts on this airline agreement with Transport Canada, which we have been able to have two... .

We had the original agreement and now with the announcement that was taken, we have the current agreement which has a little over six months because, for the two-year agreement, it was to be revisited for every six months. The six months have passed and so the next six, we're working with Transport Canada to try to continue that six months and all indications are that that's going to take place.

It has a number of impacts through our government, such as the Department of Economic Development and Transportation, our finance department, and our health department, and our procurement on the Community and Government Services side. Through all that, we are working very diligently to try to ensure that we use that agreement to our fullest intent, which is to keep our airlines operational. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Your first supplementary question, Madam Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you. Thank you for the minister's response. As the minister may recall, we held a televised hearing in this Chamber during the previous Legislative Assembly on the issue of the codeshare agreements between the various northern airlines. At that time I suggested that we need to lobby the federal government for a new program that would directly address the high cost of flying in the north and I suggested that we look at the kind of approaches that are currently used in places like Alaska. What is the minister's position on this suggestion? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have a position in terms of what Alaska is doing right now, but it's one that what we're dealing with right now is our current situation and airlines are our only road system in Nunavut. We don't have any roads and we need that flow of traffic through our territory. What we have elected through and which was, what, two years now already, is that the government used its buying power to try to get airlines interested and we have signed up with agreements with

Canadian North and also Calm Air on the major routes. That's currently the system that we're in right now. I'm not currently looking at anything new at this point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Your second and final supplementary question, Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the minister can look back at the *Hansard* and see what was discussed at that time.

As the minister is aware, the federal Order in Council that formally authorized the merger between First Air and Canadian North included the requirement for an advisory board to be established, and it is my understanding that the Government of Nunavut has one seat on this advisory board. Can the minister provide an update today on the activities of the advisory board? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have details in terms of how they're meeting. As governments, we provide that appointment. That work, in terms of the task force is advising the Minister of Transportation, and also going through that merger. I am confident with our appointee there that he is doing all the good work that impacts Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1244 – 5(2): Food at Isolation Hubs

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to the people of Nunavut and Amittuq. I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Health, and it is with regard to the isolation hubs.

I was informed by one of my constituents that the meals provided are not adequate at the isolation hub. My question is: have there been any complaints about the food to your department? Have there been any complaints about the inadequate food at the isolation hubs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, of course there have been complaints about the food, and again, on the other side, we have been told that the food is very adequate, and some are provided more food than they can eat. We have different tastes and everything, but we have heard complaints and we have heard compliments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister. I'm pleased to hear that.

I know, and for the information of my constituents, is the food supplied by the isolation hub hotel, or are they provided by the department? Where does the food come from? Is it from one source? Who supplies the meals at the isolation hubs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From what I understand, they are provided by the isolation hub, and you can make your complaints to the staff if you are not happy with the quality of the food. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, we do hear many complaints and in order for us to all have the same information, some people have to pay for their meals or additional surcharges are added, and some get a stomach ache due to their food. I am just clarifying that to this House.

For my last question, we have heard that the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., arrived at an agreement related to the provision of country food, especially for our elders who are at the facility, actually all of them; however, elders should be the priority.

Can the minister clarify to this House if there is an agreement to provide country food that will then be shipped directly down to that facility? What kind of news is available here? Is there an agreement between the Department of Health and other entities to make country food available? I would like the minister to inform the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He stated that some people have to pay for food. The people at the isolation hubs do not have to pay for the food that is supplied. If they chose to order food from outside the hub, of course they have to pay for what they ordered.

People in the isolation hubs do not have to pay for the food that is supplied to them. With regards to country food, there is an agreement between Qikiqtaaluk Corporation and the hub, so that they will supply country food at the isolation hub. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Question 1245 – 5(2): Whale Cove Water Treatment Plant

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for recognizing me again. (interpretation ends) My question is for Minister of Community and Government Services, and it is regarding the most important infrastructure project currently planned for my constituency and that is the water treatment plant in Whale Cove.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important project. I don't think I have to explain how important it is to have clean water, drinkable water for any community. My first question for the minister is, can she please provide an update to the House in terms of the progression of this project towards construction? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Community and Government Services, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for his question and I hope his community and his family are well.

Mr. Speaker, the department is working diligently to provide year-round drinking water to Whale Cove. Currently the community has a filter box, which is a seasonal treatment plant, and is an off-the-shelf plant to address the seasonal water drinking issues in the community. The filter box plant is meant as an interim solution until a permanent solution is constructed.

Currently the department is working diligently to develop a permanent water treatment solution for Whale Cove. The design-build tender documents are in development for the design and construction of a new water treatment plant. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister. (interpretation ends) In terms of the permanent solution for Whale Cove, this new water treatment plant, can the minister provide an update in terms of the time-line for construction of the new water plant, and explain whether there have been any delays due to COVID-19? (interpretation) Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Community and Government Services, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) As I had stated earlier, the department is working diligently to ensure that the water

treatment plant facility in Whale Cove...trying to get the project up and going so that their water treatment plant is addressed.

The goal of this water treatment plant will be fully operational by March 2024, but until then the department is working with the filter box system. There were delays in sending some of our water treatment samples to Winnipeg, but with the assistance of the Department of Environment, we have been using their testing, their capabilities within the wildlife office to ensure that the testing is done on a regular basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main: I have no further questions; I'm having technical issues, Mr. Speaker. My apologies.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. There are technical issues. Oral Questions. Member for Aivilik, Mr. Netser.

Question 1246 – 5(2): Replacement Air Terminal Buildings

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me again. Now, I want to add to the questions posed by Member Towtongie, and I want to supplement it and ask questions to the Minister of Transportation.

Now, the minister responded earlier, that there were five communities that had replacement plans for the air terminals in their locations, and it has already passed a year since the projects were deferred, Mr. Speaker.

It is now past a whole year that the minister said that they would undertake an (interpretation ends) RFP or Requests for Proposals (interpretation) process to deal with the construction costs if the budget was overrun. When bids are higher during the tendering process, how would the minister deal with excessive bids?

Actually, my first question is when is the deadline for the (interpretation ends) tendering process? When the tender goes out, when is the closing date? That's my first question. (interpretation) Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do not have a specific time frame for this process, and further, I appreciate your asking another question on this matter.

It will not be an RFP but it will be a (interpretation ends) tender (interpretation) or using a tendering process. Once the decision is made to release the tender, then we would dictate the closing date as well.

I don't quite recall the actual times it takes to keep a tender open, however, once the tendering process is opened, then I will inform my colleagues as there are five communities that are impacted. Once it opens, I will notify the relevant colleagues with the information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. Now, when projects are put out for tender, especially for capital projects such as infrastructure, some bids are way above the actual costs of the facility, and the government has to then determine which path to take.

If the costs are way higher than estimated, then the capital project requires more supplemental funding, and the government has to determine if they need to go to the FMB for more funding. When the bids are not that far from the estimate costs or if the budget is close, would the government be able to deliberate on this if the bids are too high in this process? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have to consider these issues, and we have an agreement with Transport Canada where they pay 75 percent and we pay 25 percent. That 25 percent today is \$7.5 million, which has been approved here in the House, which I am very appreciative of, but when the tender is going to be outside of the budget, we may need to meet with the (interpretation ends) Financial Management Board (interpretation) or the federal government.

If that will be the case, we will do that process. Based on what information we have today, we try to access the proper budget in advance, but because of COVID-19, we don't have any idea what extra costs will be. That is because of COVID-19, and this will be our first time since the pandemic to tender this out due to the impacts of the pandemic. At this time, I cannot really respond, so I apologize to my colleague for being unable to respond. We will be using this for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I can throw this idea out for your consideration in this House. Now, the Inuit organizations are usually our government's partner, as well as NTI, whom they say they are constantly working together with.

The Inuit organisations are within the three regions and most have a (interpretation ends) construction arm. (interpretation) In the Kivalliq region it would be Sakku Corporation, and in the Baffin region, it would be the Qikiqtaaluk Corporation. They usually try to win these contracts.

Perhaps, it would make better optics for our Inuit partners if the infrastructure projects were to bid on it. When infrastructure such as schools or air terminal buildings, or health centres, many members would like to see that, and we often speak about the need to hire more Inuit from Nunavut, and the regional Inuit organizations usually hire more Inuit.

Nonetheless, I believe it can create an opening for the regions, and this would really help the development of certain companies if the government were to enter into construction partnerships with the RIAs by stating that this facility will be built in Sanikiluaq or Arviat, and we want to partner with you. Is this possible at all? Or is that impossible to think like that, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

Perhaps this is consideration that you may wish to entertain. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have five communities that will get new airstrips, and we will take them in one tender. Perhaps the Inuit organizations will submit bids with proper budgets in their bids.

This unique as we usually take each project individually, and I think it will make a big difference. I think that would be the way to go, and we have agreed in this House that when the capital items are presented, we do go by that road, and we will go by that road on this particular project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Members, the time for question period has expired. Mr. Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to revert back to Item 5.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. The member is asking that we revert back to Item 5. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Joanasie, please proceed.

Revert to Item 5: Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you, colleagues. We rarely have visitors these days and I have been forgetting to offer recognition. However, I would like to appreciate our pages, including my daughter Cynthia Joanasie who is here now, as well as her classmate Ava Whitworth. Let us welcome them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. We commend those pages who often help us out. Let us proceed. (interpretation ends) Written Questions. Returns to Written Questions. Replies to Opening Address. Petitions. Responses to Petitions. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. (interpretation) Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towtongie.

Item 12: Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters

Committee Report 035 – 5(2): Bill 63, An Act to Amend the Traffic Safety Act

Committee Report 036 – 5(2): Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Nunavut Business Credit Corporation Act

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I wish to report that Bill 63, *An Act to Amend the Traffic Safety Act*, and Bill 64, *An Act to Amend the Nunavut Business Credit Corporation Act*, have been reviewed by the Standing Committee on Legislation and that the bills are ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

Our chair, Mr. Main, would have introduced this, but as co-chair, I am mentioning it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Bills 63 and 64 will be placed on the Order paper for Friday March 12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. Tabling of Documents. (interpretation) Minister of Community and Government Services, Ms. Ehaloak.

Item 13: Tabling of Documents

Tabled Document 368 – 5(2): Nunavut Emergency Management 2018-19 Annual Report

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I'm pleased to table the Nunavut Emergency Management's 2018-19 Annual Report. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Tabling of Documents. Mr. Lightstone.

Tabled Document 369 – 5(2): Nunavut Association of Municipalities Resolutions

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table today a number of resolutions that were approved at the 2019 and 2020 Annual General Meetings of the Nunavut Association of Municipalities, as well as the organization's June 2020 meeting of the Board of Directors.

Mr. Speaker, these documents contain important topics such as: alcohol imports, municipal funding, Access to Information Privacy and Protection legislation and training, and parking garages. I encourage all members to review the documents with care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Tabling of Documents. Notices of Motions. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills. Motions. First Reading of Bills. Second Reading of Bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Bills 58, 59, 60, 61 and 62 with Mr. Akoak in the Chair.

Before we proceed with the Committee of the Whole, we will take a five-minute break.

>>*House recessed at 11:30 and Committee resumed at 11:37*

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

Chairman (Mr. Akoak): Welcome back, committee. I would like to call the committee meeting to order. In Committee of the Whole we have the following items to deal with: Bills 58, 59, 60, 61 and 62. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and good morning. We wish to commence with the review of 2021-22 Main Estimates for the Department of Finance, followed by the Department of Economic Development and Transportation, the Nunavut Arctic College, the Department of Human Resources, Culture and Heritage and Environment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>>*Whistling*

Thank you. Are we in agreement we first deal with Bill 59?

Some Members: Agreed.

Bill 59 – Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, 2021-2022 – Finance – Consideration in Committee

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes, please proceed with your opening comments. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members. I am here to present the Department of Finance's request for appropriations as part of the 2021-22 main estimates.

In total, we are seeking just under \$103 million for the Department of Finance's operations. Most of our annual budget; about 70 percent of it, is allocated towards centrally administered funds. These are costs or initiatives the Department of Finance pays for on behalf of the whole government. I will speak to these momentarily.

The rest of our department is relatively small. In fact, less than a third of what we are seeking, \$31.4 million is to support the core business of our three main branches; Corporate Management, Fiscal Policy, and Comptrollership.

As a central agency, about 90 percent of our core operating costs are for staffing. Specifically, we are seeking \$28.1 million to pay for our employees' compensation and benefits costs, salaries, pensions, benefits, and the like.

Our department is not seeking appropriations for any new positions in 2021-22. Our core compliment will remain at 198, like last year and the year the before that, including the 33 positions within the Nunavut Liquor and Cannabis Commission; a public agency that covers its own costs, and so does not require appropriations from taxpayers.

Our structure in 2021-22 includes 231 positions. The Department of Finance works to keep our other core costs down. Only \$3.3 million of our total projected budget in '21-22 is to pay for operating expenses like travel and transportation, supplies, contracts, purchased services, and the other usual expenses.

Members of this committee have in the past asked about our approach to budgeting. As in past years, our budgeting exercise considers needs and requests line by line at a divisional level. This allows us to adjust budgets upwards where we may need it while encouraging us to reduce other budgets in turn.

As a result, we are essentially maintaining our request for the day-to-day operations. For our three core operating branches, our proposed budget for '21-22 is just \$28,000 higher than in '20-21. In short, Mr. Chairman and members, it is business and budgeting as usual for the core Department of Finance.

As I noted earlier, our Centrally Administered Funds Branch makes up the main part of our department's annual budget, though consists of costs and programs the department takes on for the wider government. This year we are seeking \$71.5 million for these central programs, about \$3 million more than last year. There are three main reasons for this change.

First, we are increasing our budget for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission by \$3.3 million. This "right-sizes" our budget in response to the increase in rates the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission implemented last year.

Specifically the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission increased its rate applicable to office workers by about 60 percent, from \$1.01 to \$1.62. While this rate increase became effective in 2020, we learned about it too late in last year's budget cycle to build it in to our request for appropriations. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission further increased this rate to \$1.63 in 2021 and increased the maximum assessable salary to \$97,300 from \$94,500.

As an employer, the Government of Nunavut is paying significantly more for each of our employees. Our '21-22 budget request reflects this increase.

Second, we are increasing our budget for employee medical travel by \$2.5 million, or about 9 percent.

As an employer, the Government of Nunavut has agreed to pay for certain costs associated with medical travel that our employees may require. From a payment perspective, the Department of Finance has no decision over these costs. Rather, they are driven by the health needs of individuals and their interactions with Nunavut's health system.

The Department of Health provides the health services for these individuals and, where they identify an individual as a GN employee, allocates some of those costs to the Department of Finance to cover as employer.

Medical travel costs have steadily increased in recent years. Our estimated need prepared early in the fall assumes the general demand for medical travel continues to increase.

Third, we are reducing our budget request for the Nunavut Carbon Rebate by about \$2.9 million relative to '20-21.

The Government of Nunavut uses the Nunavut Carbon Rebate to pay for half the federal government's carbon tax. In this way, consumers only directly pay half the tax when they fill up their vehicles or oil tanks.

Nunavummiut have benefited from this initiative since the first day of the federal carbon tax. Since then the Government of Nunavut has paid out \$3.1 million through the program, 50 percent of what the federal government has collected from Nunavummiut so far based on their fuel consumption.

Mr. Chairman and members, we initially estimated how much the Department of Finance would need for the Nunavut Carbon Rebate in the spring of 2019, before the federal carbon tax had even come into effect.

As it turns out, it looks like our early assumptions overestimated how much fuel Nunavummiut would consume and, as a direct result, overestimated how much Nunavummiut would pay in carbon tax and the cost of the Nunavut Carbon Rebate. Nunavummiut are purchasing less fuel and paying less federal carbon tax than we initially expected.

As we enter '21-22, we do not expect to need the full budget we had planned for the Nunavut Carbon Rebate. It is appropriate we adjust this budget downwards so it can be better allocated elsewhere. The Nunavut Carbon Rebate itself will continue as planned for the benefit of Nunavut's fuel consumers.

Mr. Chairman and members, the three main drivers I just mentioned are each related to centrally administered programs and driven by external factors. Together they account for much of the year-over-year growth in the Department of Finance's overall budget.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and this ends my opening comments. I would be pleased to take any questions at the appropriate time. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. Does the chair of the standing committee have comments? Ms. Towntongie.

Ms. Towntongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to provide opening comments on behalf of the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts on its review of the proposed 2021-22 Main Estimates and 2021-24 Business Plan of the Department of Finance. (interpretation ends) The department's proposed 2021-22 operations and maintenance budget is \$102,953,000. This represents a 3.0 percent increase from the 2020-21 fiscal year. The number of positions in the department is increasing from 229.0 to 231.0 PYs.

Members raised a number of issues and concerns during the minister's recent appearance before the standing committee. The Department of Finance provides support to the Financial Management Board. A government-wide issue for which the Financial Management Board has responsibility is the size of the public service.

The total number of positions in the government continues to increase. The government's proposed 2021-22 main estimates indicate that there are approximately 5,123 positions in the government's departments and major Crown agencies and territorial corporations, excluding the Qulliq Energy Corporation. This represents an increase of approximately 135 positions over the number accounted for in the 2020-21 main estimates, and an increase of approximately 447 positions from the 2017-18 main estimates.

It is important for the Financial Management Board to be mindful of the need to control the growth in the number of government positions being added to organizational charts at a time when departments, public agencies, and territorial corporations continue to face significant challenges in filling their existing vacancies. (interpretation) It is also important to note that approximately one-third of the government's total operations and maintenance spending is now allocated to compensation and benefits for its own workforce. For the 2021-22 fiscal year, this amounts to over a half a billion dollars.

(interpretation ends) The 2020-21 Ministerial Letters of Expectation to the boards of directors of the government's major public agencies and territorial corporations were tabled in the Legislative Assembly on September 29, 2020. The responses to the letters of expectation were tabled in the Legislative Assembly on September 29, 2020. The standing committee looks forward to the timely tabling of the 2021-22 letters and responses.

The department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates that one of its priorities for the 2023-24 fiscal year is to "establish formal memoranda of understanding between all territorial corporations and the Government of Nunavut to ensure efficient and effective administration of operations." The standing committee will be monitoring progress in this area.

The department's 2020-23 business plan indicated that one of its priorities for the 2020-2021 fiscal year was to "complete a fiscal review of the Government of Nunavut's main revenue and spending trends, including the modeling of various revenue sustainability options." However, the department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates that it "did not progress far on this deliverable due in part to disruptions of COVID-19." The department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates that one of its priorities for the 2022-23 fiscal year is to "review select tax legislation for potential updates." The standing committee will be monitoring progress in this area and highlights the importance of changes in tax rates being approved by the Legislative Assembly.

(interpretation) On November 8, 2016, *Taking Steps to Reduce Alcohol-Related Harm in Nunavut* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly. (interpretation ends) The department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates that one of its priorities for the 2021-22 fiscal year is to "Conduct a review to identify impacts of the Iqaluit Beer and Wine Store on nearby communities." The standing committee looks forward to reviewing the results of this work.

The territorial *Cannabis Act* received assent on June 14, 2018 and is now in force. Regulatory amendments were published in the September 2018 edition of Part II of the *Nunavut Gazette*. The new provisions provide that "a maximum of \$750,000 per fiscal year, as defined in the *Financial Administration Act*, may be paid out of the Liquor and Cannabis Revolving Fund for expenses related to education campaigns promoting the socially responsible use of liquor and cannabis under section 59.1 of the Act." The department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates that one of its priorities for the 2021-22 fiscal year is to "Develop a grants and contributions program to support community-driven social responsibility initiatives." The standing committee looks forward to reviewing further detail on this new initiative.

The department's 2019-2020 main estimates and 2019-2022 business plan reflected the creation of a new Financial Management Development Division. Its purpose is to "build financial capacity across the government, with an emphasis on increasing Inuit participation in financial management careers." The division's proposed budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year is \$465,000. The standing committee strongly supports initiatives in this area.

That concludes my opening statements on the proposed 2021-22 Main Estimates and 2021-24 Business Plan of the Department of Finance. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Towtongie. Looking at the clock, we will now break for lunch and come back at 1:30. Thank you.

>>*Committee recessed at 11:54 and resumed at 13:29*

Chairman: Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome, Inuit. (interpretation) Inuit who are watching the televised proceedings and listening to the radio broadcast, (interpretation ends) welcome. I would like to call the committee meeting to order. Does the committee agree to let the officials appear before you?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. For the record, Minister Hickes, please introduce your officials. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No stranger to House, Assistant Deputy Minister Dan Carlson, and Director of Corporate Services Jo-Anne Falkiner. I'm terrible with titles. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes. We've done our opening comments this morning. Are there any general comments to the opening comments? Seeing none. I thank you. Go to page C-4, Corporate Management. Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of questions. In the draft 2021-24 business plan on page 33, zero out of four executive-level positions, zero, were filled by Nunavut Inuit employees as of September 30, 2020, but your draft business plan indicates that your department will have a total of four executive-level position as of this March.

My question is: according to the draft business plan, two out of five of these positions will be filled by Nunavut Inuit employees. Which specific executive-level positions are planned to be filled by Nunavut Inuit employees? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question. There might be some confusion with HR being devolved from Finance. Our total executive positions remains at four. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Just a reminder, minister, to you use the mute button there. We can hear conversations.

>>*Laughter*

Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My final question: the 2021-24 business plan states that one of the priorities for '23-2024 "Establish formal memoranda of

understanding between all territorial corporations and the Government of Nunavut to ensure efficient and effective administration of operations.”

My question is: why will this work will require two years to complete? Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My final question.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do appreciate the question. It really reinforces how diverse our Crown corporations are in their mandated duties. So there is a lot of commonality, but then there's a lot of uniqueness to each Crown corporation. So to make sure that we're putting the right measures in the memorandum of understanding, to make sure there's appropriate levels of oversight where needed, and some autonomy where it is also needed. So it is a little bit more complex than it looks at from at first glance, but the time is needed to do that work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. The final name on my list, Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I go to the budget, is it okay if I ask a couple questions with the minister's opening comments? (interpretation) It's okay? (interpretation ends) Okay. Thank you. On page 2 of the minister's opening comments, it says on the three main reasons for this change, “First we are increasing our budget for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission by \$3.3 million.”

I thought, Mr. Chairman, that the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission was self-funded from businesses that pay into the commission to pay for their operations. Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm actually glad the member raised this question. I think it's a very important one to look at. As an appropriation, this is our expected expense because we are a client of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission. So through our employees we have to cover their premiums. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser: Thank you. I thank the minister for that response. Now on page 3, about the third, “We are reducing our budget request for the Nunavut carbon rebate by about \$2.9 million, relative to 2020-21” and the GN uses the Nunavut carbon rebate to pay for half of the federal government carbon taxes.

We are aware of that, and recently, Mr. Chairman, the news was on that the federal government was going to increase the carbon tax throughout the nation. I'm just wondering, with reducing the budget to \$2.9 million, wouldn't it be best to keep this

budget in there to offset the further increases that the Trudeau government is going to impose to the people?

My next question would be: by how many cents per litre is the federal government going to increase the federal carbon tax? *Qujannamiik*.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for the interest of the public, those new rates, I'll call them, or new stages that the federal government's proposing start in 2023, so it's not an immediate impact.

Again, I thank the member for allowing me to highlight this a little bit. With the projections, as we talked about quite deeply last week, with the amount of fuel reduction and usage that we've experienced, one of the things that was impacted, not just with our revolving fund, but also with our carbon tax.

We've sold a lot less fuel than was anticipated, so a lot less tax coming back. It's not a matter that we're reducing the budget; we're forecasting a reduced reimbursement of that carbon tax from the federal government.

In doing so, we recognize that we've put it in with the measure that we've already taken with some of the tax measures and other green initiatives that we've been funding through the carbon tax. We're a little bit overspending on it right now, but we anticipate as carbon taxes announce increase, it'll balance out over the medium term. I hope that gives a proper definition. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, minister. Just a reminder to the member we have gone past the general comments to the questions to the comments on page G-4 but I'll allow you when we're on the comments section. Thank you. Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Those were my questions to the minister's opening comments. I thank him for giving us a total explanation on those questions I raised now.

On page 22 of the corporate management plans, the priorities are to review the Nunavut cannabis legalization approach to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. As of today, how many retail outlets have come to the cannabis commission in terms of wanting to open up a cannabis store? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In my description in the last question, I neglected to answer the member's question on what the anticipated fuel impact pricing would be. We estimate approximately 2.5 cents per litre, but again, it does depend on the pricing established by Petroleum Products Division.

Mr. Chairman, with regard to specifically, and I'm trying to remember what the member's question was, I got so focused on the... I appreciate the nudge from the member. When we put out our call, and we've actually recently put out another call of expressions of interest from licensee applicants, currently we only have one applicant, but to my knowledge there were a couple more that had some inquiries into the department. Going through the process of what hoops they got to jump through to make sure that they get their licensing conditions established before they bring forward a formal submission, but right now, there is only one applicant. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser: Thank you. That brings up another question on the cannabis question. The hoops and jumps that one has to face; can the minister elaborate a little bit more on that? What are they? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When I say hoops, I don't mean to intend it to be interpreted as a real cumbersome process to apply for a licence, but just for the sake of clarity, Mr. Chairman, through you, if Ms. Falkiner could respond to the member's question.

Chairman: Ms. Falkiner.

Ms. Falkiner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When an individual or a corporation wishes to open a cannabis business, we have to recognize that we're working with a restricted substance, so we are fairly rigid in making sure that they meet all the requirements to look after that substance properly. We do have a list of requirements and we have a handbook that we have created and hand out to potential retailers so that they can make sure they meet all the regulations and different things they have to do, but it starts out with meeting to work with the city to get a business licence.

They need to... I'm just blanking here right now. They need to... Oh, my goodness. I'm going to have to... Just give me one moment here or actually I'll let Mr. Carlson do it because I have told him it all.

Chairman: Sorry, Mr. Carlson. Just a reminder to the guests that we do have interpreters that need to keep up. Mr. Carlson.

Mr. Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of what we're looking for, we want a potential applicant to show to us that they can sell cannabis safely and securely under the law. As Ms. Falkiner mentioned, we want them to make sure that they're following other rules like local business and municipal licences, etcetera. We want them to show us that they can be responsible. We want to see that their physical store is secure. We want to make sure that they are storing the cannabis properly. We want to make sure that the staff are trained and know how to sell cannabis safely and what our laws are.

In terms of the types of requirements, as Ms. Falkiner mentioned, they are available through a handbook on our website, so we can provide a copy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) In a community where they want to do a liquor plebiscite, when they want to open up alcohol education committees, is it different with the cannabis portion where an individual may want to open up a retail store, let's say, in a "dry" community? They don't need to be required to go through a plebiscite is my next question. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The member is correct. Because it's a nationally regulated product, it is legal to have in Canada, so a community wouldn't be able to do a plebiscite to ban it. They may choose to not approve business licences, which would force, again, residents to the online purchase or through illicit purchase methods. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser: Thank you. That brings up another question. With the readiness of Internet in all the communities now, and I take it that there's nothing in Nunavut in terms of having a cannabis store where people from Nunavut can order from, are they monitored when, let's say, somebody from Timbuktu wants to order from Vancouver, the pot capital of Canada? Are they allowed to do that? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As of now, there are only two online retailers that are licensed to sell in Nunavut and through them, that's where we receive any tax or markup income that comes in through the legal sale of cannabis. I believe there might be another company that has put little questions in to see the viability of business on their end, but until we actually have retail sales, there are only two licensed online retailers of cannabis for Nunavut clients. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My final question is the completion of the review of the Iqaluit wine and beer store, which was a pilot project, and I understand that it was concluded June 20, 2020 and they're evaluating data relating to changes to alcohol-related indicators such as crime levels, emergency room visits as the wine and beer store here in Iqaluit caused a spike in terms of crime and visits to the hospital. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question. Anecdotally, there was a little bump at the very beginning but it has leveled off and in some cases even decreased.

I know with my other hat with my Justice file I have spoken to RCMP and right now one of their main challenges with it is that people aren't consuming the hard spirits as much, so some clients are a little bit more combative when they interact with the RCMP, but as far as increases in other categories, there haven't been the increases that sometimes are perceived publicly. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. The next name on my list: Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask one question on this item, specifically within the policy document here, which has an English title of (interpretation ends) Nunavut Carbon Rebate Contribution policy (interpretation) and the lower paragraph starts off at 1, and it is bolded and this language is written here. Environmental Stewardship and the English is written this way (interpretation ends) "...respect and care for the land, animals and environment."

(interpretation) I would like to know if you have an agreement with the Department of Economic Development and Transportation. I hope my question was clear. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I understand the question correctly, as far as an agreement per se with the Department of Economic Development and Transportation, there is nothing established in stone.

As a government, we have chosen to allocate some of the carbon tax revenue that we do receive across a few different factors, but I think we are very limited and very restricted in our ability to be able to use more green measures at the time being. We all recognize we need to move to more of a green sustainable environmentally beneficial economy, but until we can start shutting down power plants and using more alternative energy situations, or more fuel reduction measures that we take, we are limited.

We do recognize and we do support the federal government's objective of the carbon tax in the way that it is intended to promote reductions in use or alternative uses wherever possible.

They also recognize that we have limited opportunities to do so as well, hence the exemption of our power generation, as an example. So it is an ongoing dialogue, but it is a government-wide initiative, not department by department. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This, if I understood it correctly or perhaps I misunderstood as it speaks about environmental issues, so is it specific only to the land we are standing on? Does it include bodies of water we may not be standing on as they too form part of our environment?

I would like to clearly understand this wording, and the reason why I am asking is that sometimes large marine mammals, such as what occurred last year where they found several dead whales that I was asking about previously to the Minister of Environment. In thinking of that, I thought it was included, and is why I want to clearly understand it. If I misunderstood, perhaps you can clarify this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While I acknowledge, obviously, and I'm sure the Minister of Environment would have something to add, but I believe the overall objective of the carbon tax is to promote the reduction of uses in fossil fuels, not just from a local level, or even a national or even international level, but a global level.

We recognize that greenhouse gasses have an impact on the environment in many different ways, whether it be land, water, air. We recognize we have to continue reducing fossil fuel usage, so this is our method of being able to bring in measures that will help offset that; such as the LED lighting program that Qulliq Energy Corporation is doing, which burns less power, hence needing less fuel to support that power generation, as an example. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Next name on my list, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I hope you can hear me this afternoon. Thank you. So my first questions are about the plans for a beer and wine store in Rankin Inlet. Based on the Iqaluit beer and wine store experience, what effects is the liquor and cannabis commission expecting the beer and wine store in Rankin Inlet to have on neighbouring communities; some of which are dry, some of which are not dry? What are the expected effects? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First and foremost, the objective of any beer and wine store like Iqaluit and in any community that one opens, the first and foremost objective is to reduce the hard liquor consumption and the binge drinking habits that people need to work on their own personal lives.

With regard to outlying communities, it is obviously still an opportunity for people to smuggle alcohol into a community where liquor is prohibited, but at the end of the day, that is still against the law, no matter where they're purchasing the alcohol from.

I'll use the member's home community as an example. If somebody were to be visiting Rankin Inlet or travelling up from the south, they're allowed to bring a certain amount of alcohol into the territory without getting a permit, but they're still prohibited from bringing that alcohol into the community of Arviat, as an example.

Nothing will change in that manner. That's more on the enforcement side of things. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister. (interpretation ends) So I agree, regardless of the source, it is still breaking the law, but at the same time it is conceivable that this could lead to an uptick in the number of people breaking the law. We don't know how it's going to play out at this point.

Will the liquor and cannabis commission be tracking, say for example, the incidences in Arviat over the opening, the first year of the store's operation? Will there be any tracking done by the liquor and cannabis commission in terms of possible spill-over effects to other communities? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I'll kind of tie in my other hat with Justice. Through the RCMP and the Department of Justice, those types of statistics are tracked, and we'll continue to work with the Department of Justice and RCMP from a Finance standpoint, same as we always do. We have access to a number of different statistics, including the types of cases that they're dealing with and the impact thereof. So we'll absolutely be continuing to monitor that information. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister. (interpretation ends) I hope that we don't have an increase after it opens. We'll see.

I want to ask about the Inuit employment plan. I think I'm on the right page, Mr. Chairman. Looking at the most recent public service report, it shows that, in terms of Inuit employment, Finance is sitting at the bottom of the ranks, coming in at overall 40 percent Inuit employment. I wonder, what factors contribute to this 40 percent number? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm actually very glad the member brought this question up, and through you, Mr. Chairman, I'll get Mr. Carlson to supplement my response.

Initially, when you look at the Department of Finance's activities, it calls for a lot of professional-level positions and duties to be used. We need professional services, we need the accountants, we need the economists. There is a level of expectation on the detail and the information that we're provided. It goes back to, and I'll continue to say, we need to develop more opportunities from within, and ladder employment opportunities. We've got some great management training opportunities within the Department of Finance, but just to give the member a more fulsome answer, through you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Carlson can respond. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Carlson.

Mr. Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for the question. Yeah, this is one of the areas where we need to work on, and we absolutely recognize that as a management team and as a department.

The member asked about what specific issues with Finance might contribute to a low number, and we've talked about this internally. I'll slow down for the translator. We've spoken about this internally, we've identified two examples of issues; one is as a small central agency, we are based largely here in Iqaluit.

We've got regional operations in Cambridge Bay and Rankin Inlet, and a small team in Igloolik, but otherwise, we are Iqaluit-based, and that makes it, just by the makeup of the community, it's challenging. We don't have access to the Inuit workforce in the smaller communities, like other departments.

Another structural issue with Finance is that we are office-based work, and I personally love it, but not everyone wants to be sitting at a desk all day. We've got colleagues at ED&T, and Environment, and Justice who get out and about, and we know that that's work that a lot of people enjoy. So I think that's a structural issue with Finance that we need to work with. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. I think Minister Hickes wants to comment. Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you. One thing that I neglected to mention, and before I pass the torch on, one of the real impacts the Department of Finance does have in Inuit employment is unseen.

We train a lot of people who then migrate out to other departments, or even other organizations. So it is a great training or breeding ground, if you want to call it that for financial literacy, and for people to be able to move around, so it brings more capacity to the departments at the expense of Finance sometimes, but at the end of the day, it's providing better financial oversight across the government, and in some cases, across the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you for the information. I'm wondering to what extent the department's structure, and the fact that it's so highly centralized in the capital is really contributing to the low Inuit employment rate, or relatively low. I look at the Rankin Inlet office, for example, the latest numbers, 78 percent Inuit employment; Cambridge Bay, 45 percent; and Igloolik, 100 percent. I realize it's a small office.

I'm looking at the Inuit Employment Plan and I don't see any reference in there to increasing positions in communities which have a higher Inuit population. This was a great, I think, initiative that I saw yesterday within the Department of Justice. There was a priority in the Department of Justice that said, "Increase Department of Justice positions in communities where Inuit representation is higher." Is this something that the department is willing to consider or has considered in terms of the structure of where your offices are located and where your positions are located? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just again to give the historical context around the member's question, through you, Mr. Chairman, if Mr. Carlson could respond. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Carlson.

Mr. Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for the question. When we look at Finance's structure, there are many relatively small teams. We've got a tax team of five or six people. We've got a financial systems team that is tied to the server network and the computer system. Finance's role and team is not easily picked up and moved. When we are considering new positions and, as the minister mentioned in his opening comments, we haven't had any for a couple of years, we do absolutely consider the role and whether the role can be filled in one of our regional operations, but many of the roles almost by necessity are based in the centre. When I say "centre," I just mean the central agency based here in Iqaluit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I guess it's just a suggestion then. I would encourage the department to look at this in terms of moving positions. I do appreciate that it would be difficult and that it would not be simple, but I think it's something that we're going to see more and more as a result of the pandemic. I hate to use myself as an example, but I honestly never thought that I would be able to participate in the work we're doing today from where I sit here. I would encourage the department to consider that and I do believe it holds a lot of promise for increasing your Inuit employment.

My last question is about the deputy minister. I want to know where the deputy minister is and if he has won any games yet. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I actually just got a message from my deputy minister right now, who is watching proceedings and still giving me advice, even though I told him he should be focusing on the game against Nova Scotia tonight. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. That was Mr. Main's last question. Corporate Management. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$4,675,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Page C-5. Fiscal Management. Mr. Pedersen.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I just have one question on this, but we have yet to see.

Nunavut is one of only four Canadian provinces and territories without its own retail sales tax. Is your department considering the introduction of a new retail sales tax and, if so, when would this take effect? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can be easily quoted in this House of saying previously and I'll say it again: there's never anything that's off the table. When we look at own-source revenues, we have to consider all options available, such as the liquor tax, the bill that is before this House right now that I was sincerely hoping to have debate on during this sitting, but I do look forward to debate on it as it comes forward.

With regard to a sales tax, it is not something I am looking at right now. We do have a very high cost of living in Nunavut and you have to really take a hard look at what impact a sales tax would have on already high prices and the impact it would have on our residents. Not at this time, but again, it's something that I'll never totally take off the table. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Pedersen.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I do have another question. Your department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates on page 26 that one of its priorities for the 2022-23 fiscal year is to "Review select tax legislation for potential updates." Will this review also include an examination of whether the tax rate should be increased or decreased? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. An analysis of the current tax system is a part of that review, which outcomes of that could theoretically provide advice to either increase or decrease taxes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. The last name on this page is Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one question. In May 2017 Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay voted to have beer and wine stores. What's the timeline for opening these stores? Final question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a project that has been impacted by, obviously, the ransomware to start with and then since then the COVID pandemic. We were actually hoping to have the beer and wine store in Rankin Inlet open last fall. There have been a number of delays, but the RFP has gone out and a tender has been awarded, I believe, as recently as a week or two ago. We are looking at getting the renovations done on the retail outlet, with anticipation of opening it up hopefully early to mid-summer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Next name on my list: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I just have a couple of questions. The minister mentioned that in terms of taxes, nothing is off the table. Has the department considered implementing a non-resident property tax? Just to explain my question, I'm asking about a tax that would be paid by non-Nunavut residents who own property in the territory. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Not that I'm aware of. I know that we've had a number of different discussions on different tax opportunities. That's not something that I'm aware of any work that has gone into. It would be fairly complicated in a lot of ways, especially with our leasehold land system here. It would add some complexities to it, but maybe Mr. Carlson would probably be able to give a more definitive response. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Carlson.

Mr. Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the question. The minister said that right; nothing is off the table. We have not looked into this particular tax ourselves. My understanding of it is that in most other places in the country, property taxes are a municipal thing. For us, we run the tax system for all municipalities outside Iqaluit and Iqaluit runs its own. Again, for the next government, this is on the table, but not right now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you for the response. I think the reason I'm asking about this is I'm concerned about the footprint that the largest landlord in the territory, the Nunavut Housing Corporation, has and I'm not sure how prevalent it is, but I am aware of several incidents where a government employee retires or leaves the Government of Nunavut, but chooses to hold on to the house that they have purchased in the territory.

They then turn around and the Housing Corporation leases it from them for staff housing; I appreciate that there is a need for staff housing, but we also have a need for homeownership, and I would love it if we could encourage more people in that scenario to put their houses on the market so that people actually living in the territory could become homeowners. So that's just a comment. I encourage the department to work with the Housing Corporation and see if this is something that would be a useful or worthwhile. (interpretation) That's all. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. That was just a comment. We are on Fiscal Management. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$6,492,000 agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Page C-6. Comptrollership. Any questions on this page? None. Comptrollership. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$20,274,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Page C-7. Centrally Administered Funds. Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In 2019-20 annual report, on page 6, I think for the annual budget, 2019-20 has been allotted here under expenditures or are they revenues? 2019-20, \$2,242,282 is there, and in 2022, \$2,270,024. I believe this past year seems to show an increase from previous years. Has this total increased? That is my question. Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do apologize, I missed the very beginning of the member's question. I'm just wondering if he could be more specific on where exactly he's talking about. Oh, sorry. I was just corrected. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

When we are looking at sales income, that is an increase. Sorry, the main estimates had an amount in the 2021-22 of \$22 million and the revised estimates from the last fiscal year is \$20 million. That's basically what we're forecasting our sales to be. I hope that answers the member's question. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't think we are on the same page with the minister. Here on page 6, under Nunavut Liquor and Cannabis Commission, statement of operations, I am trying to understand salaries and benefits in English. In 2019 you have a smaller figure in salaries and in 2020 you see a marked increase of an additional \$275,000. Mr. Chairman, does that clarify my question? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for clarifying that question for me. That increase to salaries and benefits is to make sure that we have the PYs for the Rankin Inlet beer and wine store and in addition, there were two other PYs that were created here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. The next name on my list: Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: I just have a couple of questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing me. Your departments draft 2021 business plan, on page 31, that the Nunavut government budget for energy subsidies is decreasing from \$19,038,000, since last year, 2020-21 fiscal year to \$16,107,000 in the 2021 fiscal year. That is a decrease of \$15.4 million. Why the decrease? What accounts for it? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do apologize. I lost where I was. Mr. Carlson would probably be best suited to respond to the member's question. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Carlson.

Mr. Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for the question. That decrease is what the minister mentioned in his opening comments; we need less money for the Nunavut carbon rebate going forward because we are spending less on fuel. We don't think we need it, so we are removing it from that part of the budget. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, the business plan on page 31, the budget for employee benefits has increased from \$23,543,000 in the year 2018-19, to \$44,592,000 to this year, 2021-22. That is an increase of over 89.4 percent. Why the increase? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Over the last couple of years, we have had some financial pressures with our employee medical travel, which makes up a chunk of that. In addition to that, the increase in rates to the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission actually brings in, so just those two alone are nearly \$6 million of that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for your response. My final question: on page 31 of business, Nunavut Child Benefit. It is not increasing; it is at \$2,055,000. It is a non-taxable amount paid monthly to qualifying families with children under 18 years of age, which is funded fully by Nunavut.

Why is there no increase? It has been like this for a number of years now, I believe. There is no increase up to 2024 and the cost of raising a child is increasing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My final question.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those monies come from a federal source that we turn around and allocate through the child tax benefit system to make sure that it gets out to the most vulnerable people in the population. So there are other models of being able to help people out with their families. This is one way that the Department of Finance is able to assist our most vulnerable. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is not answered. I'm asking why there is no foreseeable increase in the cost. It is remaining the same from 2020-24. Why is there no increase of this amount? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to give the full concept and the history behind it, through you Mr. Chairman, if Mr. Carlson could respond. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Carlson.

Mr. Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The rates for that program are set in law, so the actual amount of money is established in the *Income Tax Act* itself. When rates are set in legislation, it takes a lot of work to change.

We did consider it a couple of years ago, but then the federal government came in with its Canada Child Benefit. That goes to the same families and the same individuals. So although it looks like our budget is flat, the families that are receiving it are actually getting a lot more money these days because of the federal program, and so the decision

internally was that if the federal government are coming in to support, then that is great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. The next name on my list: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I would like to follow-up on this line of questioning by Ms. Towtongie.

I believe it was with Family Services yesterday, the *Nunavunnuarutit* – Nunavut Seniors Benefit, I believe in that example, the department had looked at federal benefits and then increased accordingly, or alongside the federal program.

When you saw federal changes that increased the amount to the same recipients as the Nunavut child benefit, did the department consider putting into place an increase, or is there a specified amount of time that has to pass before the amount is reviewed?

If it is set out in legislation, is there anything in the legislation that specifies when a review is needed and what factors are reviewed? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have that operational level of detail, so through you, Mr. Chairman, if Mr. Carlson could respond to the member's question. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Just apologies to the gentleman; I have a hard time saying your name because there are too many spaces between my teeth.

>>Laughter

Mr. Carlson.

>>Laughter

Mr. Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The rates are in the *Income Tax Act* of Nunavut for those interested in checking. There is nothing in that Act, that section, that would trigger a required review, to answer that first question.

In the broader picture, when Canada came in to announce its Canada child benefit, we did look at whether it was appropriate or whether this merited an increase. We worked with colleagues at Family Services and the Canada child benefit is quite significant.

So it wasn't just a matter of Canada increasing a little bit what it was providing that maybe we would want to match. The Canada child benefit from 2017, I think it was, is a major increase. I have it in my head. I don't have the numbers in front, but I have it in my head at the time that it was another \$19 or \$20 million to families in Nunavut.

So when we compare that to our \$2 million, that was a lot of new money to these families and folks can always use more. I appreciate that, but when it comes to recommending where we can spend funds in support of these individuals, in collaboration with Family Services, we decided there are better ways to spend territorial resources, and it was in that context the income assistance review was taking place.

So, some of the funds and some of the enhancements through that from a few years ago was to recognize that with this federal support of families, there are other individuals and groups of individuals in Nunavut needing more help from the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you. I would like to ask about the employee benefits line item. As Ms. Towtongie, again, mentioned, it's seen a huge increase over the last recent past number of years, almost doubling. The minister, in his response mentioned that there had been pressures for employee medical travel, and also Workers' Safety Compensation Commission premiums, which accounted for \$6 million of the increase.

When we look at the figures that Ms. Towtongie had mentioned, the move from, I believe it was \$20-something million to where we are now, \$44 million; what explains the large increase over a relatively short period of time? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, just for the level of detail to make sure the member's provided, if it appropriate, through your, Mr. Chairman, if Mr. Carlson can respond. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Carlson.

Mr. Carlson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So there are two parts to this, as the minister mentioned; there's the Workplace Safety and Compensation [Commission], and then there's the medical travel.

For the WSCC, the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, we're increasing our budget by \$3.3 million for this coming year. That's driven by a few things. Largely, it's because the WSCC has increased the rate that it charges employers like the Government of Nunavut.

That is one of the major drivers of this particular need. As an example, the rate went from about... . The way they calculate the rate is per \$100 of compensation that we pay. So the rate went from \$1.01 a year or two ago, and it's now a \$1.63, I's say. So there's a 60 percent bump in the rate itself. When we add a few more adjustments, you know there's a

few more employees, and they're charging more, it's called a maximum assessable salary, that explains the WSCC one fairly well

For the medical travel side of things, this relates to medical travel broadly, as Nunavummiut access services, and are flown elsewhere for treatment, the Department of Health pays for it and then identifies which of those individuals are GN employees, and then charges us, as the Department of Finance. As we have discussed over the years, medical travel costs have been steadily increasing in total. This happens to be our employer share of that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I think it's my last question and it's on the energy subsidies line item. With regard to the references made in the business plan, it references private homeownership, and support for small commercial enterprises.

Just for clarity, if homeowners feel that they're paying too much for electricity, or small businesses feel that they're paying too much for electricity, where do they direct their comments to? Is it to the Qulliq Energy Corporation? Is it to the Utility Rates Review Commission, or is it to the Department of Finance? That's my last question. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think you'd be hard pressed to find anyone in Nunavut that thinks that they're not paying too much in power expenses. It's a very expensive place to generate power and distribute it. As far as any rate concerns or issues, that would be directed at the Qulliq Energy Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Main said that was his last question. Centrally Administered Funds. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$71,512,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Go to page C-3. Finance. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$102,953,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Do members agree that we have concluded the review of the Department of Finance?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hickes, closing comments.

Hon. George Hickes: Just very briefly, Mr. Chairman, I thank the members for their scrutiny over this budget. I realize that as a central agency of the Government of Nunavut, we don't have a lot of programs and services *per se* to defend a budget, and a lot of our costs are very fixed and demand-oriented, but I do want to thank my team here with me, Jo-Anne and Dan, and behind them you would see a series of other people that put all this work together and do our public accounts and all of our reporting. There's a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes that are done to get me ready for these appearances as well as every day that we sit in here.

Just a final word is "Go, Nunavut! Let's go!"

>>*Applause*

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Hickes and your staff, for answering my colleagues' questions. Sergeant-at-Arms, please excuse the guests. We will be taking a five-minute break to set up for the next department, which is Economic Development and Transportation. Thank you.

>>*Committee recessed at 14:31 and resumed at 14:35*

Bill 59 – Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, 2021-2022 – Economic Development and Transportation – Consideration in Committee

Chairman: Thank you, everyone. Welcome back. I see some guests beside you. Does the committee agree to let the officials appear before you?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. For the record, Minister Akeeagok, please introduce your officials and then proceed with your opening comments. Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my left is Jimi Onalik, Deputy Minister; to my right is Gabriel Karlik, who is currently the Assistant Deputy Minister of Economic Development, and right next to him is John Hawkins, Assistant Deputy Minister of Transportation, and to my far left is Lewis MacKay, who is a policy director. His mother was just here and now her son is now here. With that, I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you, my colleagues, and it is my pleasure to be here to present the 2021-22 operations and maintenance budget and the 2021-24 Business Plan for the Department of Economic Development and Transportation.

While the pandemic disrupted some of the plans outlined in our last business plan, we accomplished much in 2020. In addition to ensuring that the regular business of the

department continued, some of the COVID response programs staff worked hard to quickly introduce include:

- (interpretation ends) The Small Business Support Program, which provides \$5,000 in relief funds for artists, retailers, tourism operators, and other small businesses. As of February 12, 2021, 145 small businesses had been approved for nearly \$611,717 in relief funding. Small Business Support Program staff continue to process applications for new and additional funding. Given the uptake, we expect the total allocation of \$1.6 million for this program to be fully utilized;
- As of December 31, 21 applications totalling \$1,490,000 has been approved through the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund, with 223 jobs directly affected by the funding support;
- The Nunavut Public Arts Initiative, a new effort created by the Community Tourism and Cultural Industries Program, provided over \$300,000 in funding to support local business and arts programs in Nunavut's communities;
- The launch of ShopNunavut.ca, a new website to encourage residents to shop and vacation locally during the pandemic; and
- Economic Development and Transportation partnered with the Nunavut Development Corporation to help produce and distribute reusable masks for use in the communities and isolation hubs. The project resulted in over 15,000 reusable masks and created direct income for 45 seamstresses in the communities of Arviat, Rankin Inlet, Chesterfield Inlet, Taloyoak, and Pangnirtung.

Looking ahead, 2021 will be another important year for the department. We plan to continue to improve the way we operate the department and will continue to make progress toward improving the service delivery provided to Nunavummiut through our Motor Vehicles Division, which has been our first priority for the past few years. Although reorganizing this unit was delayed by the ransomware attack and then the pandemic, work continues to improve the line of business.

(interpretation) Mr. Chairman, I will now return to the details of the proposed budget. For 2021-22, the proposed budget is \$91,796,000, a decrease of \$250,000, or in financial terms 0.27 percent less than the budget for 2020-21.

The year-over-year change is due to removing one-time funding of \$250,000 to develop the Mine Training Strategy. Economic Development and Transportation is working with Nunavut Arctic College and Family Services to finalize this for implementation in the coming year.

I look forward to putting the pandemic behind us so that we can continue to excel in our departmental mission to develop our economy and transportation systems in ways that support a positive, self-reliant future for Nunavummiut, our communities, and our land.

As of January 31, 2021, the department is 61 percent staffed, with 62 percent of these staff being Inuit. Including casual employees raises those figures to 83 percent staffed, 63 percent of whom are Inuit. In the coming year we will continue to advance our progress with respect to Inuit employment.

That concludes my opening comments. My officials and I would be happy to answer any questions the members may have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Akeegok. Does the chair of the standing committee have comments? Mr. Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon. I am pleased to provide opening comments on behalf of the Standing Committee on Community and Economic Development on its review of the proposed 2021-22 Main Estimates and 2021-24 Business Plan of the Department of Economic Development and Transportation. The department's proposed 2021-22 operations and maintenance budget is \$91,796,000. This represents a 0.3 percent decrease from the 2020-21 fiscal year. The number of positions in the department remains unchanged at 155.0.

Members raised a number of issues and concerns during the minister's recent appearance before the standing committee. On June 8, 2016 the *Government of Nunavut's Report on the Review and Reform of Income Assistance and Economic Development* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly. The report indicated that the Department of Economic Development and Transportation will "place a greater focus on job creation when reviewing departmental programs." The Department of Economic Development and Transportation's proposed 2021-22 main estimates include a total of \$23,767,000 in grants and contributions expenditures. The Department of Finance publishes an annual, government-wide report on grants and contributions expenditures. Although this report provides a listing of what amounts of funding recipients received during a given fiscal year under different programs, very little information is published with respect to purpose of the funding or the results that it actually achieved in such areas as job creation.

The department's 2020-23 business plan indicated that one of its priorities for the 2020-21 fiscal year was to "Support an ongoing review of departmental grants and contributions programs" and to "Develop and implement performance management system for departmental grants and contributions program." Information published on the Government of Nunavut's website indicates that "a blanket one-time exemption to all Grant and Contribution Policies has been approved for 2020-2021. It waives the one-year requirement for expenditures made under a contribution agreement."

The standing committee notes that the department has made a number of significant changes to the administration of its grants and contributions programs. The standing committee supports the department placing a greater emphasis on job creation, especially in relation to funding that is provided to for-profit businesses. The standing committee also emphasizes the importance of funding recipients being in compliance with the terms and conditions of their contribution agreements with the department.

A number of policies administered by the Department of Economic Development and Transportation, including the Strategic Investments Program Policy, contain specific annual reporting and tabling requirements regarding the administration of these programs. However, these reporting and tabling requirements are not currently being met in all cases. The standing committee applauds the department for having begun the practice of preparing and tabling comprehensive annual reports under its Community Transportation Initiatives Program Policy and its Country Food Distribution Program Policy.

The proposed 2021-22 Main Estimates of the Department of Economic Development and Transportation include \$3,358,000 in core funding for the Nunavut Development Corporation and \$900,000 in core funding for the Nunavut Business Credit Corporation. The standing committee looks forward to the minister's 2021-22 Letters of Expectation to these corporations being tabled in the Legislative Assembly in a timely manner.

On September 9, 2019 the Government of Nunavut announced that the Fisheries and Sealing Division of the Department of Environment would be transferred to the Department of Economic Development and Transportation. The department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates that one of its priorities for the 2021-22 fiscal year is to "Begin consultations on and drafting of the 2022-2026 Fisheries and Sealing Strategy." The standing committee looks forward to the new strategy being tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

The department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates that it has "collaborated with Inuit Organizations, industry partners and federal government agencies to establish a Tourism Task Force, which is developing a Tourism Recovery and Resiliency Plan for Nunavut." The standing committee looks forward to the plan being tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

The department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates that "a Cultural Industries Arts and Creative Industry Strategy is in progress and a draft will be completed by December 2020." The standing committee looks forward to the new strategy being tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

On June 4, 2019 copies of the Memoranda of Understanding between the Government of Nunavut, Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation and Agnico Eagle Mines were tabled in the Legislative Assembly. The standing committee encourages the Minister to report annually to the Legislative Assembly on the administration of these Memorandums of Understanding.

The department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates that one of its priorities for the 2021-22 fiscal year is to "Monitor impacts of the Canadian North airline merger and provide analysis and advice." The Government of Canada's recent fall fiscal update indicated that it is developing a new "Regional Air Transportation Initiative." The standing committee will be closely monitoring these initiatives.

Members of the Legislative Assembly have been raising concerns for a number of years regarding the significant delays that residents of smaller communities experience in obtaining driver's licences and general identification cards. The department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates that its priorities for the 2021-22 fiscal year are to "Expand driving examiner training and accreditation for community-based driver examiners in conjunction with municipal partners and others; implement the recommendations of the organizational review in support of improved community examination and service delivery; expand connectivity to the Motor Vehicles Information System to Government Liaison Offices as they become integrated into the Government of Nunavut's Core Business Network; develop internal Information Technology capacity to operate, manage and maintain Motor Vehicles Information System and Drivers Licence/General Identification Card systems and revise the driver's licence regulations to incorporate changes to National Safety Code Standards." The standing committee will be closely monitoring progress in these areas.

That concludes my opening comments on the proposed 2021-22 Main Estimates and 2021-24 Business Plan of the Department of Economic Development and Transportation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Rumbolt. Before we go to page by page, comments on the general comments? Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, minister and to your officials.

I'm looking for clarification on page 1 of your opening comments here, the section about the Small Business Support Program, which provides \$5,000 in relief funding. At the very end of your paragraph there you say, "Given the uptake, we expect the total allocation of \$1.6 million for this program to be fully utilized." Are you still on track to utilizing the whole fund and, if you do not, what happens with the surplus at the end of the fiscal year? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Yes, we do plan on using the full utilization and, if it does not get fully utilized, it becomes part of our consolidated surplus or deficit, which is part of the budget. It's a budget line item that we're using under this particular program and, if it doesn't get fully utilized, it would be recorded as a surplus within that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker...ah, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Comments on the opening comments? None? Go to page by page. Page K-4. Corporate Management. Any questions? Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good day, minister. (interpretation ends) My first question is regarding the effects of COVID-19 on the department. In the

current fiscal year, is the department set to lapse any funds due to COVID-19 and, if so, how much and what areas? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are finalizing the variants right now and we won't know fully until that occurs. What I can say is with the money that we currently have and what we are not able to use as a part of this COVID-19, and I highlighted in my opening comments, is that we redirected a number of our funds for the Small Business Support Program, for that relief program and also for the Community Arts Program.

I appreciate and I applaud my cabinet colleagues for helping us out in terms of reshaping the funds that we currently had that we were planning on doing, that didn't happen. I think, if I can say, the biggest portion of the budget that was impacted would have to be our Community and Tourism section on this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) When it comes to adapting to COVID-19, and again, this is a at a department-wide level, and I'm asking the question here so I don't have to ask it on every other page: when we look at the department as a whole for the upcoming fiscal year, what types of measures is the department looking at? Specifically, are you planning on delivering any sector-specific support; specialized support for tourism, for the arts, etcetera? Just at a department-wide level I'm asking that question. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: Thank you. I think it is a government-wide question and I appreciate the member for asking me this.

From a departmental level, there are a number of sectors that we are looking at and if I remember, I mentioned in the House, there are recovery plans in certain economic and transportation parts, and in each of those sectors we are trying to develop the plans.

In the initial stage we had our federal partner, CanNor. I apologize to the interpreters. For the life of me I forget what CanNor stands for, but it is a federal agency that does wonderful funding for our department, along with our Inuit organizations looking at different sectors.

How are we going to help out the tourism sector right now? We do know that the cruise ships are not allowed in the arctic until the 2022 season because of this pandemic, so how are we going to help our communities that have relied solely on these cruise ships? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) On page 229 of the business plan it mentions ongoing work with regard to the *Nunavummi Nangminiqaqtunik Ikajuuti Act* and Regulations. I know that you have made some changes recently to the regulations and I think those changes are going in the right direction, but my question is about training specifically.

I was asking questions to Family Services and the development of training plans on major construction projects is not moving very fast. I believe there has not been a single training plan developed. For the NNI Secretariat, who deals directly with employers and businesses, what is the feedback or what is the big commentary from the private sector in terms of these training plans and the potential to develop more of our own workforce here in Nunavut? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good work has taken place this past year with the help of our Nunavut Nangminiqaqtunik Incentive Secretariat, along with our partners with Family Services. We focused on a couple of major projects that we looked at and are working with the contractor in terms of identifying the training plans and also tracking their Inuit contents into this.

The two major projects that we currently working closely with are on the Qikiqtani Correctional Healing Centre, which had a requirement of 15 percent for Inuit, and currently they have achieved so far 15.6, but that's a moving number, and also on our marine infrastructure both for Pond Inlet and for Iqaluit, we have taken that initiative and in terms of going that next level, which is getting a training plan and trying to ensure that those targeted employment plans are not just met but are exceeded. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I think my last question on this page is about grants and contributions funding and how applications are evaluated.

The principal of first come, first served is quite simple; whoever gets their application in first gets their application scrutinized first. I know it's kind of in use for many different programs, but if the department is trying to emphasize job creation in terms of allocating your dollars to different projects, how do you balance those two ideas?

First come, first served, meaning whoever puts in their application first gets the first crack at the money, versus emphasizing job creation, which would suggest that job creation statistics and numbers should matter more than who got in their application first?

I'm trying to understand how this is going to affect the decision-making within the department. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for the question. I think a majority of our grants and contributions are readily available and they are usually with a defined time, a closing date, which allows our department to set up a working group of core number of working in terms of reviewing all those applications. It's not first come, first served; it's typically they take all the applications and go through it and assess each of them, either being if it's for job creation or for certain initiatives.

Our grants and contributions are usually... their applications are way more than they are. So I'm going to use the transportation initiative, which I am very familiar with. In the municipalities, their ask is typically over \$4 million and we have a million dollars. So our staff, working with the communities, start carving that down to a million dollars to see what they can do within that funding envelope. I say to each of our sectorized programs that if there is over subscription, then we start working with the proposals in terms of, how we can work?

I also want applaud our staff. When they start seeing proposals that don't necessarily fit within this program, we have been working very closely with our partners, with our Nunavut Business Credit Corporation or with Atuqtuarvik or the Canadian funding agency with the acronym is CanNor. I need the actual name for it because we tend to farm those out. So that's how our grants and contributions have been utilized through that process. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: That was Mr. Main's last question. The next name on my list: Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I only one have question on page 228. (interpretation) It says, "Environmental Assessment Review Team." (interpretation ends) Environmental Assessment Review Team. Your department engaged an external firm to conduct an evaluation of the environmental assessment strategy and performance.

The purpose of this strategy was to ensure continuous, active, effective Government of Nunavut participation in the impact review processes. Now, looking at Baffinland and the NIRB, the Nunavut Impact Review Board, my question is: as of today, what's the status of this work and will you commit to tabling a copy of the completed evaluation in the Legislative Assembly? My final question, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is an internal review of our environmental assessment review team. As you might know this review team consists of all departments that have impact for any development that is taking place.

We do have a series of specific communities and the one with most hierarchy is the sustainable development committee, which consists of all the deputy ministers that are impacted by the development, with the Department of Environment and the Department of Economic Development and Transportation being the co-chairs. Through this, and through our changes of policies from time to time, we look internally to ourselves. Is this working? How can we better this? That's what the report would be. I don't know if there'd be value in terms of tabling it, but I can definitely look at the report and help determine whether to table it or not, because often times these are very internal and very focussed in terms of what interdepartmental work can take place. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. The last name on this page, Mr. Kaernek.

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, minister and your staff. First of all, here in your business plan on page 229, under Priorities for 2021-22, you want to "Strengthen direct collaboration with Regional Inuit Associations." Perhaps we're talking the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, the Kivalliq Inuit Association and those ones. How are you going to be strengthening... Let me say it this way. (interpretation ends) How are you going to strengthen the direct collaboration with the regional Inuit associations? If you can further elaborate on that, in terms of maybe, for example, mining? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a progression in terms of what we're collaborating with. On page 229, it's very focused on the Nunavummi Nangminiqatunik Ikajuuti. That is a huge policy that both organizations do work together on to ensure that it runs the way it should be, which is to benefit Inuit businesses. That one we will continue.

For work related to mines or development, that's a bigger question. I think that's a government-wide question that we need to have discussions on. This is something that I'm very dedicated to working with, and something that I'll continue to collaborate with the Inuit organizations and the mining industry, and throughout.

One of the things that we weren't able to do this past year was what was a very successful way of collaborating was our mining symposium, which we didn't have this year. For this coming year, I'm hopeful, but it's something that we need to look at. With some of the symposiums and workshops that are taking place, a lot of them are now being conducted online. I don't know if we have been preparing ourselves for that, but it's something we definitely, through those collaborations, a lot of work gets done through those. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Kaernek.

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you for the explanation. I'm glad that you'll be focusing on that as a priority too. Just a quick question here. So moving on to these policies; let's say for the Strategic Investment Program policy, it will expire in the next 15 months. As of today, what is the status of your department to revise or renew these policies? (interpretation) That's my last question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A lot of good work took place last year before any of this ransomware or COVID took place, where we did a wonderful review and adjusted some of our programs, grants and contribution. The next one was, and through this business plan, is to do the remainder, such as the program that you just mentioned that worked. We are continuing to work on it and to update it, and I think, if there are going to be any changes, it would be through those reviews. I understand some of our policies have lapsed, and this one is getting close to the end date. That's one of the challenges that we have is to try and get them updated as soon as possible.

There has been a slight delay in terms of this, but I'm very optimistic that my staff will be able to work this through. If we need to change our policies, it would be through those, or change the criteria and that, it would be through those reviews. I'm optimistic by this year; a lot of work is going to get done this coming fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. The next name on my list: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. The Nunavut Economic Development Strategy was released in June 2003, and reached the end of its 10-year life in the spring of 2013.

Your department's 2020-23 business plan indicated that one of its priorities for the 2020-21 fiscal year was to "Finalize and implement the Nunavut Economic Development Strategy."

Your department's draft 2021-24 business plan indicates on page 231 that "...this priority was shifted to developing a strategic approach unique to the economic needs during COVID-19 pandemic."

What are the specific elements of the new strategic approach? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you. Through you, if I could ask my Deputy Minister Jimi Onalik to respond to that. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Onalik.

Mr. Onalik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you for the question. Our focus has been on some of the hard lessons we have learned in the Nunavut economy through the COVID impacts, recognizing that there are some serious gaps, especially in human resources.

We have seen the impact of the need for critical workers in many of the communities highlighted where we need to do a bunch of work when it comes to community-based businesses and increasing our capacity there.

That, coupled with the recognition, as the minister has pointed out, the incoming wave of young people who will be entering the workforce, we anticipate that it will be heavily focused on employment creation and training for people to enter the workforce and add to the productivity of the economy. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Onalik. It sounds promising and I'm hoping you guys will be successful. Because of this pandemic, there is an urgent need to get more of our economy going again, and once we attain herd immunity, a lot of Nunavummiut will be returning to the operating mines; Baffinland and Agnico Eagle.

With that will come a lot of re-emergence of disposable income in the communities of Baker Lake, Rankin Inlet, Pond Inlet, Sanirajak, Clyde River, and so on. I'm hoping that you guys will be able to keep up and get ahead of this wave that is coming so that we can get more and more of our people perhaps starting up small new businesses in your communities. That is just a statement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. That just being a comment, thank you. We are on Corporate Management. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$10,680,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Page K-5. Economic Development. Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Welcome minister, and staff. It is good to see you Gabriel Karlik. It's always nice to see you.

(interpretation ends) My two communities (interpretation)of Naujaat and Coral Harbour, benefit a lot from sports hunting, and because of pandemic measures there has been a halt on it, and we didn't have any sport hunters coming up. The two communities benefit because there are very few jobs available in the communities.

I don't know whether tourist operators have been utilized, but if they have benefitted at all because sports hunting is very much impacted by those who hunt polar bears or caribou. Have any consideration been given to rentals for boats or skidoos, because they also benefit a lot and, if so, what assistance has been provided in this regard? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a very relevant question, as my constituents as well have gone through hardships especially since polar bear sports hunts are on hold, as it greatly benefits the communities.

With that being the case, there has been work to try and offer more assistance through programs. I spoke earlier about the \$5,000 that is available under grants, and quite a few outfitter companies have requested assistance and quite a few have also been provided financial assistance.

However, with respect to that idea and with the future still being murky, we don't really know or anticipate the reopening of the tourism sector, and we have tried to collaborate with the officials from the Department of Health to see how tourists or sports hunters can be accommodated once they are able to travel to our communities and whether certain restrictions could be lifted.

Many hunters are dependent on this revenue and it is the sole occupation of some hunters, and provides much needed economic revenue, so in feeling that impact, we have tried to accommodate that in our plans. If it is not possible right away, we have used training opportunities within the tourism sector within my department. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I just want to make mention of Mr. Hawkins, as it is great to see him. (interpretation) May I ask then how many, or can you elaborate how many Inuit who are tourist operators have been provided assistance, and how many have requested assistance or applied for assistance from Economic Development and Transportation? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I mentioned earlier in my report, the funds are still available, and those applicants are still being reviewed. I cannot say how exactly what the numbers are that have applied for the program, and the deadline is not yet finished.

I hope more will be applying. In the first place, we have people who applied and received assistance, and we open applications again, and I hope more people will be applying. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister. So that \$5,000 that the minister is referring to that can be applied for, is that enough for the tour operators in our communities? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If sport hunters come, the costs are very different. It's not enough for sports hunting, but it's what's we have decided how we're going to help. We try to make it as sufficient as possible and we have given them an additional opportunity for further training if they would like, and we have training funds available to them. I don't know if they have applied to them yet or not.

Different Inuit organizations also brought out support materials, so they can ask for support from other organizations. The Government of Nunavut, Inuit organizations and the federal government have been working together to try to help them. So the federal government usually lends money, and that is available as well for our businesses. That is what we have been trying to do. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not quite sure, but boats are very expensive and they can get very expensive, and they are generally bought by tour operators. Have there been any tour operators who have borrowed money from Economic Development and Transportation? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The money they apply for from us isn't a loan. We only provide grants and contributions. I don't know any details of any money that has been borrowed, but if they applied for money from my department, they are funded through grants and contributions.

If they borrow money from entities like the Nunavut Business Credit Corporation, we work with that group too, and if any of them owed money to that corporation and they can't repay it, the business credit corporation has stated that they can wait longer for the payments. COVID-19 has slowed down their office too, but we are all trying to help other Canadians get through this.

When you go through hardship, you really feel it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, thank you for saying that, minister. I was going to ask a question along those lines. Tour operators basically rely on these rich clients and if they borrowed money from the Nunavut Business Credit Corporation, then they usually used what they are compensated with from the sports hunters to pay for their debts.

So I am glad that the minister and his department, because of COVID-19, have managed to delay the payments and that they don't have to pay them right away. I'm really glad about that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, that was just a comment.

Chairman: Thank you. That was just a comment. The next name: Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have one question, but it might become two, and I'm thinking how to word it.

On June 8, 2016, the Government of Nunavut's *Report on the review and reform of Income Assistance and Economic Development* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly. This report was prepared by the Department of Family Services and the Department of Economic Development and Transportation.

The report indicated, minister, that your department will place a greater focus on job creation when reviewing economic development and transportation programs.

The Government of Nunavut's most recent annual report on grants and contribution spending indicates that your department provided a total of \$20,907,715.66 in contribution funding to businesses, organizations, and individuals during the last fiscal year, 2019-2020. My question is: how many full-time and part-time jobs were created or sustained by this spending? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for the question. As you might be aware, we are getting our documents ready to table to this House through the various grants that go through there and in there it does reference how many jobs are created. I don't have that document with me as it is a draft document, but I am committed to providing and tabling it to this House to demonstrate how many jobs have been created as a result of our grants and contributions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My final question and it's very good to see Gabriel Karlik and Jimi Onalik. I knew them when they were boys in Rankin Inlet, and John Hawkins, but my question is, the Country Food Distribution Program annual reports, I'm wondering how your department evaluates the success of this program. My final question, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is one of the programs that is very popular within the communities and the success would be a recent ministerial statement that I made is that for Baker Lake, they will be having a functioning community freezer that they currently have an outdated one and through that, that's going

to give opportunities for the community to use this facility to advance their food security, to advance harvesting.

It is a very good program and a very positive program that I am proud to help with in advocating for this through this budget process. I thank my member colleague for raising this and let's continue and keep them aware and I hope that through this process, we get this budget approved so we can advance more of this wonderful program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Before we go to the next person on the list, we will be taking a 20-minute break. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 15:33 and resumed at 15:54

Chairman: Welcome back, colleagues. I hope you had a good break. We're on Economic Development and the last name on this page. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) My questions are also about the Nunavut Economic Development Strategy. It looks like the department is now focusing on recovery plans, and I know this was discussed a little bit earlier, but specifically how many separate recovery plans is the department going to develop and will there be funding attached to each of these recovery plans? My question. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have the firm number. I know they were sector by sector. In terms of trying to get a recovery plan, and as part of the recovery plans, what we're trying to do is identify what supports are needed. I can't say whether there's going to be funding specifically for it, because between the organizations, what we have been doing is identifying what needs to get done, and when it's getting done, which agency is the best fit to help support that. I don't have that level of detail with me at this current time. I apologize to the member for that, but that's work in progress right now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) So it is an item in the business plan for the upcoming fiscal year, and I'm a bit surprised the department doesn't know how many recovery plans are being considered. Is it based on the major sectors of the economy? Five recovery plans, is it two, is it a dozen? I guess the bigger question is: what's the timeline for getting these recovery plans completed and start implementing them? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a variety of activities that are taking place, and in terms of trying to get the actual documentation done, we're trying to aim for the end of summer to do this.

Some of the examples that I can focus on would be... so currently, we're in discussions with our mining partner. More specifically, with Agnico Eagle Mines in terms of returning our workers back to the mine site. With that, that's a good working relationship with our chief public health officer and his office, along with our department and the mine itself, in terms of bringing them back in.

On the fisheries front, I think good progress has been done thanks to the jurisdictions, the fishing industry, along with our chief public health officers, and the other public health officers in other jurisdictions; in terms of figuring out how to bring our Nunavut workforce into their fisheries and keep fisheries open.

For the tourism side, that's a bit more difficult, which is why I have a taskforce that's doing this, because from all this, from the federal, provincial, territorial meetings that I've attended, tourism was the first to be hit and will be the last to recover. The people wanting to travel to these places is more difficult, so that one will require a bit more planning and that.

Each of these sectors, we're treating them separately, but we are trying to have recovery plans in terms of...will everything be done by end of the summer? I don't think so, but that's something that my officials will be working towards. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) My next question is about the review. Well, it says ongoing review of the departmental grants and contributions programs. So a lot of your programs are under this Economic Development Division. I'm looking at page K-7 and a lot of these programs, for example Nunavut Mine Training Program, Nunavut Prospectors' Program, a lot of them, the year over year amounts have not changed in quite a while.

So my question is as part of this ongoing review, is the department looking at, you know for example what the right budget is for the Nunavut Mine Training Program? Is that part of this ongoing review that's been planned for this year? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Will the department also be reviewing its application requirements, and specifically I'm talking about the amount of paperwork that's required for some of the applications depending on the application? You know if you're applying for \$100,000, you should probably you know have some very you know strong requirements for documentation. But if somebody is applying for \$800 to get some carving tools, I don't think they should be required to submit the same amount of paperwork as the other example I used.

So the paper burden on applicants, is that something that is also part of the ongoing review? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Yes. Mr. Chairman. I agree with the member. It is and I think when we introduce the small business program, the relief program for \$5,000, I initially thought it was a simple one page application form that was going to happen, but we used the existing form which was 12 pages and something that our small businesses stressed to myself and to my officials, and we've adapted to reducing a lot of that. Some of our programs are in the 2 page program.

So it varies in terms of on the amounts and I agree with you in terms of if somebody's going to apply for an \$800 program, some of these grant programs we use our economic development officers to do it, and that will make it a lot easier from them too.

So we're definitely evolving and this is something that through this business plan, that we want the ongoing review, it's going to help some simple changes like that have made a difference in something that I want and to continue to advocate and push my officials to making this relevant to our clients, which is our Nunavummiut. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you minister. (interpretation ends) Yeah, that's a good example of where it would be great to reduce the paper burden and get the money out the door. I am happy to hear the ministers, you know, recognized that.

My last question is regarding on page 231. It mentions community freezer projects in a number of communities. Whale Cove, for example just received a new community freezer. Would the minister be willing to verify, not here on the spot, but go back and verify with the communities that they are going to see an increase to their funding provided by Community and Government Services to offset the utility costs associated with new community freezers? That is, I believe, supposed to be the case. I'm just wondering if this department can help to make sure that happens. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for your question. Currently we don't know who needs funding and through this program, the Department of Economic Development and Transportation was tasked to provide more assistance, and to clarify who the freezer belongs to, along with the information outlining funds they can access.

For the operations, the funds are available from (interpretation ends) Community and Government Services (interpretation) but if they cannot access those funds, there is also the (interpretation ends) Community Food Distribution Program (interpretation) that they can apply for funding as well and if this program has to be continued, then we would have to make changes, so that they don't have to apply annually.

So, yes, we want to make some improvements and I want to ensure we move forward and if it has to go through another channel, then we will use that if needed. Nonetheless, this program has provided much needed information about who now owns the freezer, and how much operational funding will be required as that information is now written, and that makes me happy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. That was Mr. Main's last question. Thank you. We are on Economic Development. Total Operations and Maintenance, to Voted. \$30,436,000. Agreed.

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Page K-6. Transportation. Questions. No questions. Transportation. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) As the minister mentioned, this is a sector that has been heavily impacted by COVID-19. As the department mentions the Shop Nunavut Campaign to promote and support Nunavut businesses. That is on page 234 of the business plan.

Is the minister able to explain whether this Shop Nunavut Campaign has been successful or not and maybe some examples of how it has succeeded. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm hoping that we will have tangible results to show the members how successful this campaign has been. That is something that I will continue to work on.

From what we are seeing there is some success and one of the examples that I want to use as a prime example is with my constituent who is a tourism operator who has now started

selling country food for Nunavummiut. Those are the very successful things that I'm starting to see. For especially those tourism operators that really won't have clients, they have been able to retool. There are other successes, I think, that I should be able to make more tangible so we can see exactly what success it is.

At this point, I don't have a formal one to present to this House. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) My last question is on the priority that has been deferred from this year and it doesn't actually a reason why it was deferred, and that's the streamlined system for tourism permitting, and it mentions it on page 234 that it has been deferred to 2022-23. I wonder if the minister can explain why it has been pushed. It might be because of the pandemic, I'm unsure, and maybe explain how important it is to get in place a streamlined system that will hopefully make it easier for tourism operators in Nunavut. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you, I would appreciate it if Mr. Onalik can respond to the question. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Onalik.

Mr. Onalik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Originally we had been looking to achieve some results internal to the GN, but based on feedback we have heard from tourism operators, many of the other licences and fees that were relevant are outside of the GN, so it's going to take us more time to help bridge together a one-window approach to that. With the reduction in the number of tourists, it has been hard to kind of keep that conversation going, but it's still on our radar to make it much easier for tourism operators to receive all their relevant licensing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chairman: Thank you. That was your last question, Mr. Main? Next name on the list: Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of questions; the first one is on page 246. Your department submitted a number of proposals for the second round to the National Trade Corridors. This is called the "Northern Call" and it was in December 2020. Which proposals were submitted and when do you anticipate the federal government making decisions on the submission? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Currently it is before Transport Canada for the submissions that we made. The major one is the Qikiqtarjuaq deep port that we resubmitted to it and the other one is on the cargo/maintenance shelters for a number of communities. Those are the two major ones that we submitted within this in terms of for this winter call. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My final question and Chesterfield Inlet has been really a leader in this because they're building a Honda trail, almost a road, to Rankin Inlet and it's to Josephine River, so I am very pleased with your community initiatives programs.

On page 246 of your business plan, one of the priorities in the '21-22 fiscal year is to "Manage the Kivalliq inter-community road study." I had hoped that there would have been a submission to the National Trade Corridors for an actual road, but as of today, what is the status of this study? My final question, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As in our letter that we sent, the letter I sent to the Minister of Transport Canada when we were submitting these proposals, one of the emphasis that I had done in the letter is to indicate that the Kivalliq intercommunity road study is in progress and we would want to make sure that Transport Canada has funding identified in the future as the study evolves and gets done. It's not that we didn't include them in this go around; it's just that we're doing the study and it was premature to put a dollar figure to do an actual road for this, but we have highlighted that in terms of our submission, specifically for the study. The request for proposal should be coming to getting this scope of work done. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Next name on my list, Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon to the department. I would like to ask questions on your business plan of page 246, where it talks about the Oceans Protection Plan projects. The department received \$45 million from Transport Canada for this, and you talk about improvement to sealift sites in 10 communities, and fuel resupply systems in 17 communities. I just want an idea where this money is going, which communities are these projects happening in? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This was very good for us in terms of getting money through that program. The ones that were proposed and led by the Department of Economic Development for the sealift improvements for the following; Arviat, Baker Lake, Cambridge Bay, Chesterfield Inlet, Kugaaruk and Rankin Inlet.

Proposals led by the hamlet and supported by this government for; Kinngait, Qikiqtarjuaq and Taloyoak. Those are for the sealift improvements.

Also, the proposal led by the Department of Community and Government Services was to have a stripping and warehouse facility in Iqaluit. Those are the major projects within that announcement that was made for Oceans Protection funding. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for your response. Can the minister give us a bit of an update on our new port that's being developed? Where are we at? Are we on time? What are the next steps? Maybe I'll stop at that and I'll ask more questions as we get along. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a capital project that should be done by this year. It's delayed, we call it delayed because it was supposed to be done earlier, but we should have it just done by the end of summer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I always like to try and sneak a little capital question in just to get an update. I appreciate your response on that. I'm just going to go to the next page I wanted to ask him questions on, and that was on page 252 of the business plan. I'd just like more information about the Iqaluit air terminal building.

I know that according to your business plan, a building evaluation was completed and recommendations have been submitted to CGS, and I do see that the COVID-19 response team is currently occupying the space, but I'm wondering if the minister can tell us more about what's going on with the yellow building. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Through you, sir, Mr. Chairman, could I have Mr. Hawkins respond to that? Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are working with CGS on some of the building.... The COVID team is occupying the addition that was made to the building for the CATSA area, where the airline offices were, so in the newer area and also in an area where the airline offices used to be.

They are in an area of the building that was chosen because it doesn't have any of the issues that some of the rest of the building has. While they are moving in there, and most of that work is complete, we are working with CGS to develop solutions for the leaking parts of the building. We have come up with that, and estimates are coming together on that part of it.

They have also identified two parts of the foundation, two piles that need to be fixed, so we have solutions engineered for that as well and we are just finalizing the costing on that. The design work and the estimating to actually complete repairs to that building are coming together. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you. My last question I would like to ask is something I asked the minister today in the House, and that is about regional air transportation initiatives.

I think it was last year or the year before, I did bring up the fact that in the United States they have the air essential service where the federal government provided a subsidy to the airlines to continue to service the smaller communities on a regular basis because they had the same threat, I guess, as what is happening here, where airlines were cutting back services and some didn't even want to go into the smaller communities.

I'm wanting to ask the minister again today if that is something that has been spoken or talked about within his circle. Is this something that the minister would be willing to look at? It might be a way of doing something. I feel that Alaska has found it to be very useful and sometimes we can learn from other people's experiences. If you would be open to looking at that as well for the smaller communities that have lost some of their flights going back and forth. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Something very similar is taking place right now through this regional assistance from the federal government and from our government in terms of having the airlines agree that certain flights need to be flying to the communities.

With the current agreement we have; the current arrangement we have as a part of COVID-19 is that there is a minimum level of flights that need to take place for all communities, and that is happening now.

Through the federal government funding and through our government's own sources of money, through our medical travel and through our government travel budgets, we are able to secure all flights through every community to happen right now. That is a model that we needed to get through in order to make sure that the samples are sent and that our medical travel comes in and out.

That work is still progressing because it is something that we are trying our best to ensure that our road system is open. In addition, if I may; I know I'm answering for quite a long time, but this is something very important and I appreciate the member for questioning on this in terms of which models to follow, I think one of the exciting parts, thanks to our member from here and the Mayor of Sanikiluaq asking and pleading to be part of Nunavut.

It is a challenge that I think we needed to look at and it's something that we are hopeful that we will get through, through a tender process or through a request for proposal is to get airlines to fly within Nunavut, because currently we do have a community that, if you want to go to Nunavut, you have to leave the territory. I know Kitikmeot is in that same situation, and it's something that's always evolving, but for Sanikiluaq in particular, it's an exciting one that I hope that it will become viable, and something that we can use in terms of helping the smaller communities too. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate what the minister is saying, but that's due to COVID funding, all of the extra help that the airlines are getting now. So, I look at this as a regional air transportation initiative, to be perhaps a bit more permanent plan that's going into place that I feel would address the Sanikiluaq situation. It's money from the federal government, and if you look at Alaska, they've used federal funding to support places like Sanikiluaq so that they can continue to get the flights going in and out without the actual... It would be something that the federal government would fund and not this government.

So, that's kind of the aim I was looking at, it might be worth exploring; just to talk and to find out more about how... I recognize we're not Alaska and that we have many differences, but the common thing that we do have is small communities that are situated far away from each other, and I guess just the expense of flying back and forth between communities, I think we have that in common. I just put that out to the minister, I don't know if he wants to respond or not, but that's just a comment and just encouragement. Thank you, that's my last question on this division. Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was just last year that we issued the six-year medical and duty travel contract to the two major airlines, which guaranteed the number and frequency that need to go to the communities. I think what we did is use our purchasing power to ensure that communities do get regular services, in most communities, it was seven days a week that they were getting flights. Post COVID, that's going to return, because at this point right now, with all the travel restrictions, we're at a bare minimum right now.

Currently, we're starting to see delays in terms of, as you might now, in Pangnirtung, medical travel elders are being here for four or five extra days because the plane is full.

We're going to continue to work with our airlines to see how the frequency can improve. It's because of our existing contracts that we are able to do that, and I applaud our government for doing this.

A small community that I represent gets a guaranteed number of flights in now, and that's something we will continue to support. If there are different models and options, we're definitely open to seeing that, and I thank you for recommending the Alaskan model, it's something that we'll have a look at, but currently, we're locked into this medical duty travel that sort of helps the frequencies of the flights. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: I did say that was going to be my last question, but now here I want to ask another one. In regard to the Regional Air Transportation Initiative, so this is federal funding so in a way if you can tap into this it wouldn't be the government having to use your own money. That's what I'm really trying to push here.

The other thing is; I'd like to know how the department has been involved in this initiative to date. Have you worked with the feds on this thing? What do you know about this initiative? Perhaps the minister can elaborate for us. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My deputy minister and also my assistant deputy minister have been very involved in this as part of this initiative, but it's a government approach that we've taken when it comes to COVID, and through the great leadership from our Premier and his staff with their deputy minister being involved, the Finance deputy being a critical involvement in terms of getting this agreement and in terms of working out the details and setting up contracts with our airline industry. We are doing this in six month segments just so that we can look at the frequencies and if there's any way of improving that, and through our federal partners, they've been very flexible on this.

I have ongoing conversations with the federal transport minister, our Finance minister has conversations with his colleague, and our Premier with the Prime Minister, and also the Minister Vandal's office. So it's an interlinked through this regional airline that has been very productive, and I'm glad that my staff have been very involved and I've been involved in this, but something that we're taking it as a government approach, and I think that has gone a long way for that and I appreciate my colleagues for stepping up in terms of getting this through. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just curious to know if the minister would be willing, once everything has been kind of worked out just to come to the House

with what kind of initiatives were funded through this federal funding. That's... (interpretation) I am done. Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I very much so. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Next name on my list, Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I just got a couple questions, and that relates to drivers' licence. (interpretation) I think it was a few days ago or the day before when I was asking questions about the issuing of drivers' licences and we wait very long to get the ID. What has your department done to speed up the process? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Over the last year a lot of good work has taken place within our division. I know that it still takes a while, but it's one that we've been listening to you and members and listening to the communities. While we have been doing this, government liaison officers are there, we've been helped train them. When they're in this, I think one of the best things that have taken place is that the majority of them are now connected to the core business network, which has improved significantly in terms of in terms of the application. The backlog is still there in the communities, and when we do visit, we accommodate that.

What was an average, on a normal, not the special ones, but on average it was 60 to 90 days and for now, we're looking at 14 to 28 days, which is a significant improvement. I'm still committed and I still encourage my staff to continue to improve this. There are still more improvements for this sector, but something that I think a combination of what we have been doing so far, I'm very pleased to report on that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser: Thank you. That's a real significant improvement in terms of waiting for the driver's licence. I'm really happy to hear that because the last time I applied for my driver's licence, I waited nine months to get mine, so I'm really happy to hear that.

(interpretation) Mr. Chairman, there is a requirement to get photographed if you apply for a licence. How many communities in Nunavut have the cameras that can be used to produce those IDs? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation) All communities now have cameras and they should be working. If they're broken or if you can't take pictures, please make sure that you inform our department. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you. That's great. Thank you very much. Now, if I asked more questions, can the minister provide more information to this House during the (interpretation ends) Committee of the Whole (interpretation) about the passports that are now valid for ten years, as previously it was set for 5 years? Has his department chosen a direction towards that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We're currently working on it. We have to make some changes to the regulations and we're currently working on finalizing the details. I cannot make a statement in the House this time, but once it's all completed, we will make sure that the information goes through all of Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. This will be my last question regarding identification. Now, with regards to medical patients who are required to travel south such as Winnipeg, Manitoba or Ottawa, Ontario as many patients don't have photo IDs and will the existing cameras in the communities be used?

Do they also have to wait for lengthy periods to obtain their IDs? I believe the IDs are developed in Ottawa? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you. Yes, the driver's licenses as well as the general identification ID cards are compatible with the cameras and that is how we have prepared that, so if anyone has their photo taken in the camera, we now are having them developed right away instead of past practises.

We have now done this so there is less time to wait, and to ensure everything is the same along with the submission of the photos to the card maker so that it will be consistent. The reason why it has to go to Ottawa is related to the security features of the driver's licenses.

We have now put the general ID cards to be developed through that process in order to have it be more compatible, and that is how it is setup at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Next name on my list: Mr. Simailak. No? Mr. Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a follow-up question to Mr. Netser's question on driver's licences in the communities, one of the issues that have been coming up when you have driver training in our communities is a vehicle available for drivers to use to take their road exam. There seems to be a scramble all the time for people wanting to borrow a truck and when people ask to use personal vehicles, a lot of times we're not insured to lend our truck for that purpose.

I wonder if you can enlighten us on whether or not you have been working with municipalities so that they can have a vehicle available when they do driver training in the community. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that's going to be a challenge for all of us. As you know, municipalities have their own insurance related to their trucks, but we can definitely try to encourage the municipalities as part of this because with a licence, sometimes it's a licence to employment and it's something that would benefit the whole community. Anyway whoever, especially the smaller communities who get the least vehicles that are available, and something that we would definitely be advocating for when we're doing the driver training courses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To change the subject, first, I want to thank Ms. Angnakak for bringing up the issue of air links between Sanikiluaq and Nunavut, and I commend your department for looking into this and taking the community's letters seriously.

In your response to Ms. Angnakak, you talked about requests for proposals, but you don't mention any kind of timeline. Are you able to update us today on what kind of timeline there could be before an RFP is issued for air transportation between Sanikiluaq and possibly Iqaluit? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have a firm timeline. This is a brand-new venture that we're getting into and we're just going through... Well, we need cabinet and Financial Management Board approvals before we proceed to this. It's something that we're trying to work as fast as possible because it has been identified and I have been getting support from my colleagues and with yourselves in terms of getting this done. That's something that once I have a firm timeline, I will commit to informing you and your mayor in terms of those firm timelines, but I'm looking forward to that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Next name on my list: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to supplement Ms. Towntongie's questions earlier about the Kivalliq intercommunity road study, which communities does that entail? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: From my memory, it entails Arviat, Whale Cove, Rankin Inlet, Chesterfield Inlet, and Baker Lake. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. I think Mr. Main has two questions. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing me again. (interpretation ends) I apologize for getting my pages mixed up earlier.

On page 248 under Motor Vehicles, a priority for this year is to "Implement the recommendations of the organizational review..." I wonder if the minister can explain what recommendations will be implemented. What does that mean and what changes are coming? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are still working on that review, so I look forward to getting that and looking at the different options that could be, which we would then implement under this upcoming fiscal. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I'll move onto page 250. Before I ask my question, I just wanted to say very briefly that there is currently intercommunity travel and trade in the Kivalliq region. It is happening currently without any government support or involvement. Specifically I'm talking about the flow of freight from Churchill, Manitoba up to Arviat, and then sometimes into Whale Cove and/or Rankin Inlet. That is just for the minister to keep in mind.

I think there is a trade link there, and there is a lot of potential to increase the amount of freight over the land and over the ice.

On page 250, it mentions runway rehabilitation projects. Obviously, I'm very interested in the application submitted for Whale Cove, and that is for funding from Transport Canada. Can the minister please give an update as to those applications to Transport Canada? That is my last question. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Currently, we have the application into Transport Canada. We haven't heard the results back yet, so we are anxiously awaiting the response. Once we get that response we should know whether that is going to progress or not. We are at that stage at this point. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. We are on Transportation. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$50,680,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Go to page K-3. Economic Development and Transportation. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$91,796,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Do members agree we have concluded the review of the Department of Economic Development and Transportation?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Closing comments, Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to say a short thank you to everyone. Thank you for approving our plan. We have a lot of work to do and I thank you very much. We will do our best to make sure that everything progresses.

My officials here and the ones that are not here, they work very hard and I want to recognize all of them. Gabriel Karlik was able to come here from Rankin Inlet to support us, he is a big support for us and I am very happy about him. I thank all of my officials here, as they all do great work, so thank you everyone. I have good expectations for the future. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>>Applause

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Akeeagok and your staff. Thank you for answering the questions from the committee. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out. We will take a five-minute break while we set up for the next department; Nunavut Arctic College. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 16:49 and resumed at 16:52

Bill 59 – Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, 2021-2022 – Nunavut Arctic College – Consideration in Committee

Chairman: Thank you. Welcome back. I would like to call the committee meeting back to order. I see we have the guests sitting down already. Does the committee agree to let the officials appear before you?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. For the record, Minister Joanase, please introduce your officials and then proceed with your opening comments. Minister Joanase.

Hon. David Joanase: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation) Good afternoon, members. With me here from Arctic College is President Becky Mearns and Director of Policy Jackie Price, as well as our Chief Financial Officer, Marcello Parungao.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to present to you today Nunavut Arctic College's 2021-24 main estimates and business plan. Nunavut Arctic College maintains the operations laid out in the business plan with a budget that is comprised of a base contribution from the Government of Nunavut, third party funding contracts, and revenue from fee sources, such as tuition. To that end, Nunavut Arctic College's total main estimates from the Government of Nunavut for the 2021-22 fiscal year is \$37,984,000.

(interpretation ends) The funding for this year is a decrease of \$1,035,000 over the previous fiscal year. This difference is made of decreases in its main funding for headquarters and regional campuses. Of significant note is the completion of the law program in the 2020-21 academic year. As the academic year is complete, successful students will go on to their articling year. As the academic year falls outside of the fiscal year, this completion means a drop of \$1,730,000 for the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Mr. Chairman, while the overall funding for the college is decreased, health and wellness careers funding will increase in 2021-22 by \$717,000. This increase will largely be dedicated to the development and delivery of a Bachelor of Social Work program. The college is excited about this work being completed in partnership with Memorial University. \$695,000 is committed specifically for this work in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Members, I can confirm the college is working to conclude several foundational documents internally and with its government partners. These documents include the college's 10-year strategic plan, an information technology strategic plan, and a Government of Nunavut Mine Training Strategy. These documents will provide important structure to the college going forward for future planning cycles but also for the next government mandate. Both the *Turaaqtavut* mandate and the Legislative Assembly have provided the college with important guidance in its work to date. I believe the future continues to be bright.

(interpretation) Mr. Chairman, the college continues to draw on support networks in its operations. I am happy to report the college's board of governors now includes new representatives from Nunavut Arctic College's student and staff community, and a new member from the Qikiqtani. The college also continues to work with its university partner, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador. COVID-19 restrictions have required both institutes to adapt to new ways of working together. This partnership is working on multiple projects, including securing third party funding to collaborate with the Nunavut Research Institute on projects to support its research capacity development.

Members, as we all know, this past year has not been business as usual and while this is the case, the college is taking the lessons learned from this past year and adapting its operations accordingly. As outlined in the business plan, the college is renewing its focus on matters such as infra, technology, and Inuit employment.

(interpretation ends) As members will recall, at the end of the last legislative session, I tabled the preliminary assessments report of the community learning centres. I wish to assure members that the college continues to work through what is needed operationally to support its community learning centres now and into the future. The college continues to work within the government's capital process and beyond to identify opportunities to support these vital facilities.

Technology is an integral part of post-secondary education. This fact has become particularly clear in the COVID-19 environment. The college's reopening plan prepared staff to communicate with its community during the winter 2020 lockdown and mobilize information technology supports since that time. The college looks forward to finalizing its strategic information technology plan to support a digitally inclusive community. This plan will be released in partnership with the college's own strategic plan before the conclusion of this government's mandate.

Nunavut Arctic College continues to act on its commitment to Inuit employment and makes modest gains. The college's Inuit Employment Plan currently sits at 56 percent. While the college remains committed to improving its Inuit employment numbers across all employment categories, the college intends to focus on filling positions at the administrative, paraprofessional and professional levels. In focusing on these levels, the college could balance between filling positions located in the community which support community learning centres but also programs offered in the college's campuses. The college will continue to strive to ensure its Inuit staff at all levels are aware of training opportunities available to them as Government of Nunavut employees and through opportunities afforded to the college in partnership with Memorial University.

(interpretation) Members, these opening comments are intended to provide you with an overview of key themes as they relate to the college's main estimates and the 2021-24 business plan. I am pleased to take your questions, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Joanasie. Does the chair of the standing committee have comments? Mr. Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and again good afternoon. As the Chair of the Standing Committee on Community and Economic Development, I am pleased to make opening comments on the government's proposed 2021-22 budget allocation for Nunavut Arctic College.

Mr. Chairman, the college's total budget includes a base contribution from the Government of Nunavut, third party funding as well as revenue from other sources, such as tuition fees. The Government of Nunavut's proposed contribution to Nunavut Arctic College for 2021-22 is almost \$38 million and the college's overall budget for 2021-22 is projected to be close to \$56.6 million.

Nunavut Arctic College plays an important role in providing training and education for Nunavut's professional and trades occupations, as well as offering opportunities for individuals looking to improve their skills and employment potential. Members have been given to understand that the college is collaborating with the departments of Economic Development and Transportation and Family Services on Nunavut's Mine Training Strategy. The committee looks forward to receiving detailed information on specific initiatives involving ongoing mining operations and realistic opportunities for training and certification for residents of communities located near operating mines in order that they may take advantage of employment opportunities within the industry. The standing committee further encourages the minister to work with college staff to make greater efforts to promote trades training opportunities with high school students and recent graduates.

It is anticipated that the Memorandum of Understanding with Memorial University will also lead to a number of opportunities to revise, expand, and enhance the college's offerings in a number of academic fields of study.

Nunavut Arctic College currently offers degree programs in the areas of education, nursing, and law. The law program is currently in its final year which has resulted in less funds being allocated for the college for 2021-22 as compared to 2020-21. Members hope that all the law program students have been successful in securing articling positions for the final stage of their program. The standing committee appreciates that a requirement for graduates from degree programs to remain to work in Nunavut may not be strictly enforceable. However, it would greatly benefit our territory if graduates stayed in Nunavut to continue to work in their field of study.

Community learning centres play an important role in providing access to courses and programs which can support individuals in preparing for future education and employment options. The 2021-24 business plan indicates that the college is undertaking a continuous review of the status of its community learning centres with a view to addressing long-term capital needs in this area. The standing committee looks forward to receiving updates on what specific renovations, repairs, and replacements of community

learning centres are being planned and how these take into account the local adult learning needs and opportunities identified in each community.

The Government of Nunavut has made a number of commitments to enhance services in such areas as bilingual education, mental health, trauma and substance abuse rehabilitation, and long-term care within the territory. The standing committee strongly encourages the minister and college officials to increase their efforts to provide adequate education and training at both the community and campus levels to ensure that Nunavummiut have every opportunity to develop the necessary skills and receive the relevant qualifications to be employed in these areas.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my opening remarks. Individual members may also have questions and comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Rumbolt. Do members have general comments? Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a general comment, as we know, the Government of Nunavut is preparing for an elders facility in Iqaluit, Cambridge Bay, and Rankin Inlet, so I would like to see the college prepare to teach Inuit that can take care of elders, I don't know what it would be called, so that at the community level we will already have Inuit ready to work with elders that are in those homes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Towtongie. General comments? Mr. Simailak, it's just general comments. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, minister and to your officials. Welcome here again.

On page 3 of your opening comments there, there's a section there that I like. It's ten years a little late, but it's coming. It's the Government of Nunavut Mine Training Strategy. I'm hopeful that this will come to fruition and be of great use for mining communities of Baker Lake, Rankin Inlet, Pond Inlet; the Kitikmeot communities as well that will be coming along. I am hopeful for this. Thank you. That's all, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Simailak. No more general comments? Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regards to the minister's opening comments, it states that within their departmental budget, they have almost \$38 million, but it doesn't quite reach that amount.

I am glad to see that this initiative is going ahead, and we have all been working diligently to resolve the challenges since the pandemic, and we can now see the light at the end of the tunnel in terms of the Arctic College's role in training Inuit.

There is a \$1 million amount that seems to be missing as it totals just under that, but we can understand the reasoning behind the problems we have encountered. Even though we are still facing issues, we must try to move ahead to provide education.

As well, whenever something becomes quite challenging, we have to look for resolutions and brainstorm ways to resolve the issues today as we seem to be seeing more difficulties and I wanted to voice my support here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Qirngnuq. I see no more names. We're on Nunavut Arctic College. I will allow members to ask any questions on this proposed budget with the college on this page. Ms. Towntongie.

Ms. Towntongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to ask this question. As a result of COVID-19 pandemic, there's an increased reliance on information technology and digital platforms for ongoing learning and education. How many Nunavut Arctic College students are currently unable to access college programs due to the lack of computer, internet account and other materials and resources? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank the member for that question. It should be zero, according to my officials. The college adjusted to the pandemic by providing every student with a laptop, so all students should have access to their program remotely, and as the case may be. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Towntongie.

Ms. Towntongie: I just have a couple of questions. The college 2021-2024 business plan indicates that one of the programs funded by third party contracts is for home and continuing care. The need for Nunavut-based long-term care is becoming more urgent. How many individuals are currently receiving training under this program? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, thank the member for that question. In the previous fiscal year, 2018-2019, we did have home and continuing care program delivered. There was 60 students enrolled in 9 different courses, and we do recognize the importance of ensuring that the best care for elders and those in need receive it. However, this course was halted during the 2020 lockdown, and there's no plans to deliver the course in the 2020-2021 academic year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Towntongie.

Ms. Towntongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for your response. Though I'm sad to hear it's not continuing for this year. My final question, Mr.

Chairman. Rankin Inlet social worker program in '21-2024 started in September. How many students are currently registered in this program? Final question, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In Rankin Inlet, year one, there was eight full-time students enrolled. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Next name on my list, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, minister. (interpretation ends) My first question is regarding the relationship between the college and the government. Sometimes in the Assembly, we make a mistake and refer to Nunavut Arctic College as a government department, and that got me thinking to the amount of independence that the Arctic College is permitted to have.

You have a Board of Governors, and my understanding is the relationship is supposed to be quite different than a government department. You're supposed to have some independence. When we look at the direction for the college over the next 10 years, which is being finalized, does that direction take the college away from the government and more independence when it comes to decision-making, or does it keep the college where it is right now, or maybe it goes even closer, similar to treating the college like a government department? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for his question, all the way in Arviat.

Yes, the college is governed by a board of directors and I mentioned that we have new representatives on it. There are two from each region as well as one staff and one student representative. In terms of the relationship and how our working between the minister as well as the board, this is all outlined through the *Nunavut Arctic College Act* which outlines the roles and powers of each party.

In terms of going forward, and 10 years from now, the college is looking at different options in terms of where it will be going, and those strategic documents that I mentioned that will be done before the end of this mandate will set that direction on where the college is going.

There are different options out there, and for the Yukon and NWT, one of them has decided to go the route of a polytechnic. So, those are some options that we are looking at, but what might fit best for Nunavut will be outlined in those 10-year strategic plans. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) I'm looking at the page that mentions those foundation documents. Page NAC-4 of your business plan, it mentions the strategic plan, information technology strategic plan, the mine training strategy, and then it mentions assessment of community learning centres.

What is the next step on the community learning centre piece? I know we have a preliminary report and it's mentioned on page 14 of the business plan later on. What is the next step in terms of planning for the learning centres? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If you will allow, could I get Madam President, Ms. Mearns to respond to the question through you? Thank you.

Chairman: Ms. Mearns.

Ms. Mearns (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, (interpretation ends) and thank you for the question. The preliminary report, as many of you have seen, the dates and the number of years that have passed since those assessments have taken place are varied.

Our capital planner is working on visiting those community learning centres to get a more up-to-date understanding of the assessments of the buildings, what types of needs there are, while also working with our IT team, our information technology team, to look at not only the community learning centre itself, but what some of the different needs are within the community learning centre to be able to connect and create spaces for our programs to run.

So far, he has visited a number of the North Baffin communities, and there are plans in place to visit the Kitikmeot in the coming months. So, we are making our way through as many CLCs as we can to get a better up-to-date picture of the state of the CLCs and the needs within the communities.

I think this is also a multifaceted approach: as we are looking at the strategic documents that we're preparing, as we are looking at our program planning for the future, all of this needs to come into those conversations that we have with our colleagues, with different stakeholders and organizations that we look to work with, either to expand programming or to look at ways that we can address fee assessment and the needs that are there in our communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. When a member says CLC, it's a Community Learning Centre. This is for the new members out there. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I might be having connection issues again, so I apologize in advance. The next step for the community learning centres is going to be... I'm not just asking about capital. I think

there is a capital part to it, but it also trying to look at the learning centres and seeing if they are actually big enough to meet the role and the size of the community, or what types of programs are needed. I guess I'm just unclear what the next step is once the assessment report or the assessment work is done where does it go from there? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That work is also tied into the work that we're going in with our capital planning process, and the ten-year strategic plan of the college, so those pieces are included in that work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Moving to your Inuit employment plan page 6 and seven of the business plans. What factors are getting in the way of the College increasing their Inuit employment? Specifically, I'm interested to hear whether you're having any difficulties with staff housing issues, securing staff housing for your staff? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you. If you can give me a second. Thank you. Yes, staff housing is one of the bigger factors that we're trying to address, Inuit employment. There are other things that are at play, and we're trying to work on addressing some of those issues including possibly either re-profiling some positions and/or working with the staffing process, and evaluation to see where some positions are better suited in a particular community. Those are some things that the college is working on, but at the same time there are opportunities for the advancement of staff. If there's staff within the college that might fit the role, we try to work with the college staff as well if there are opportunities there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I just have a couple more questions. When it comes to staffing, my understanding is that the college is treated like it's a government department in that all your competitions and whatnot; they have to through human resources.

Maybe I'm wrong here, but it seems to me like on the one side we're saying the college is a corporation, but then when it comes to staffing, we're saying no, you're actually a government department, you have to use the exact same processes that the government departments do.

Would there be any benefit to the Arctic College taking over their own staffing and HR function? Has the minister discussed this or considered this? Of course, if I'm incorrect here, please correct me. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the member will allow, I think if we can have the president Ms. Mearns clarify the question, and maybe even my comments to the last question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Mearns.

Ms. Mearns (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) So we do have our internal HR staff, we have an HR manager, as well as our human resources manager, and also staffing consultants based in each of the regions that support the staffing process at the college. We do work in partnership with the Department of Human Resources and follow the processes of the Government of Nunavut when it comes to staffing.

Part of what we also do is we rely on the standing offer agreements or contracting structures to deliver certain courses or programs throughout our different divisions. We have had some discussions internally about how we continue to move forward and improve the way that we staff positions, such as instructors or other support staff that we have at the college.

I think it's part of that bigger picture discussion about what direction the college moves, and to what degree we can look at different ways of sourcing human resources into certain positions. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is something I can really support here, based on the President's report (interpretation ends) I'm thinking about hiring instructors, for example. Hiring an instructor for a course is much different than hiring a government employee within a given department, because you have a date when you need that instructor to be there, otherwise the course just simply doesn't happen.

My last area to ask questions about is the education training. I think the Minister of Education would be interested to hear this discussion, but there's a big need for more teachers in Nunavut, and it's my understanding that there's been a significant announcement of some federal funding towards training more teachers in Nunavut.

I wonder if the minister could maybe elaborate or summarize the new money that's being announced. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, this has been a very exciting announcement called the *Pathfinder Agreement*, which is a tripartite agreement with the federal government as well as Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated. It essentially provides \$42 million in federal funding over five years, of which \$34.7 million will be allocated to the Government of Nunavut, and this would be to support the Uqariuqsattitijiit Initiative.

The Nunavut Arctic College, along with our partner, Memorial University, have revamped the Teacher Education Program that is embedding this Uqariuqsattitijiit Initiative. There is going to be a ladder approach certificate, a diploma, and/or a full Bachelor of Education program.

With this, there is also an additional \$12 million through the Nunavut Implementation Panel to support our work in this, which is a great need and it is a significant amount of funding that we are investing here. We want Nunavummiut to take up this great opportunity and get those teaching positions by our Inuit and Inuktitut-speaking Nunavummiut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) That is great news and I thank the Minister of Education or the Minister of Nunavut Arctic College. I don't know who I'm talking to right now, but anyway, I thank the minister for advocating and working toward this. I think it is great news, and it will benefit our school system for years to come.

My last question on that new funding; it is a five-year commitment; roughly how many staff are anticipated to be trained through that agreement? (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You can thank the former Minister of Culture and Heritage who actually lead this initiative forward.

>> *Laughter*

In all honesty, Culture and Heritage was the driver on this and we are the benefactors of that. A shout out to Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated as well, and the Government of Canada for agreeing to this.

In terms of numbers, we are anticipating to provide many more communities with the program offering of the Nunavut Teacher Education Program. Excuse me for a second.

Thank you. Sorry for the wait. We have a rough estimate to see over the five years, to add on at least perhaps in tune of 150 to 200 additional teachers into the workforce. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Main. Thank you. The next name on my list: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Ministers and staff, it is good to see you all again.

Just to supplement Mr. Main's question on HR hiring and it relates to the instructors. The brief time I was there, I understand the issues were around wanting to see our college students graduate. In their programs we have to have consistency in terms of having our instructors. Currently I am of the understanding that they just had a two-year contract to work for the college in the instructor's department. (interpretation) I wonder if this has been addressed because we want our students to be successful in their courses. These are young people, and a lot of the students or the staff are non-Inuit, and they want stable employment. Usually, before their two year contract is up, they start looking for other employment opportunities. Has there been any change in this scenario? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some of the funds that we obtain are from the Nunavut government, some are for the courses that are made available at Nunavut Arctic College, and then there is core funding provided. Through an agreement, we are supplied monies that are limited to one or two years. That is the reason that it is set up the way it is. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you. The programs are made available to the students. It's the instructors who only sign two year contracts. They are very capable, and I know they're very capable. We provide the same programs, and the instructors are only signed down for two years, why? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It depends on which organization is supplying the money. We also make it available that should an instructor want to be an instructor on a permanent basis, they have that option. If they are on contract, then it's applied as such. Either for one or two years, it's an agreement between an organization and the instructor. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) The Mine Training Strategy (interpretation) is continually being worked on and we look forward to seeing it. There are quite a number of programs that are made available through Arctic College, and hopefully we'll see more instructors. The instructors for the NTEP program, are they only a two year agreement? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you. I can't really respond to your question. It would very likely be on an annual basis, using the mine training instructor. Once we have a strategy in place, we will have newer information. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Possibly my last question. In Coral Harbour, we have an NTEP program, and I believe it's on its second year. Can you give us an update on the students? (interpretation ends) Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In Coral Harbour, and with the students at the NTEP program, there are some students in year two, and there are eight students in total. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Have other communities requested getting mentorship through Nunavut Arctic College? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we are currently looking at which communities might be interested, and I have written a letter to the various committees. We are also currently looking at students that might be interested in that program. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): The minister indicated that he wrote a letter to the education committee. Have you had any response, and from which community, and by which organization? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you. Yes, there is some interest, but at this time, I can't say who the individual was. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): My last question. If there's an interest in any of the communities, how many communities are interested in having an NTEP program at their CLC? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Joanasia.

Hon. David Joanasia (interpretation): Thank you. There are nine communities that have students at the NTEP program. As we are getting prepared for the fall, we will be including four more communities, with another eight students. We hope to eventually include all communities, if at all possible. That's our goal. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Next name on my list, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good evening, minister and officials. It's great to see everybody here again.

First, I would just like to start off by saying it's excellent to see that the fall 2021 program offering and academic schedule is available on the website. That's really great to see, and I'm sure all of our upcoming high school grads are very excited to find out what is available.

I've just got a few questions, mainly to follow up on questions that I have been asking over the last few years. I guess I will start off with resumé writing. I think a couple of years ago I had identified that it was only offered in very few programs. I would like to ask: as of today, how many courses now incorporate resumé writing? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Joanasia.

Hon. David Joanasia: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When the pandemic hit, the college had to adjust quickly to the situation and we even now offer applications online, so that is a good thing too.

In terms of his question on resumé writing courses, I don't have those details with me. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Moving onto my next question: in colleges across Canada, the general practices of determining its performance of programs is by calculating the percentage of grads who are employed in their field of study.

I have been mentioning that to the minister for the last few years and I would like to ask if the college has begun following up with grads to identify how many actually find employment in their field of study? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Joanasia.

Hon. David Joanasia: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. The college is planning to, in our recruitment work, to have a network of alumni that would.... We want to tap into that

information to see and survey alumni and who is doing what, and where, and all of that.

Once that is set-up, we would be able to gauge that information, but we don't have it currently. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure if I had made this recommendation last year, but along the lines of alumni and grads, I think the common practice is for schools to email former students a few months after graduation to follow up and find out where they are at. So I just want to make that recommendation and move on to my next question.

Another topic that I have been bringing up is the need to utilize the campuses during evenings and weekends to expand program offerings and allow other institutions or groups to provide training in the college's classrooms.

For my next question, does the college have any intention of utilizing the main campuses for part-time, evenings and weekend courses? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you. If you could give me a second. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have one of our divisions on continuing learning, the coordinator position is actually vacant at this time, but hopefully once that position is filled, they are in charge of trying to find those other sources of funds to do exactly those types of activities. So, at this time, we want to first fill that position. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. Moving on to my next question. In last year's business plan, there was an item included; one of the priorities was to explore funding options for the replacement of learner residence in the campus community, with the most demonstrated need outlined by the learners' accommodations' assessment.

I noticed that that was not included in the current and future priorities. I was wondering if the minister would be able to provide an update on the status of that and if it's been completed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Sorry Mr. Chairman. If you allow through you, I have Ms. Price to respond to the question.

Chairman: Ms. Price.

Ms. Price: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question. Though the accommodations were considered in the last capital process that the Nunavut Arctic College was involved in, no firm capital plans are in place yet. But it has been identified as a capital consideration. So, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Price for that information. I wish you luck in securing that item in the capital planning process, as well as exploring funding options.

I'd like to next follow up on Mr. Main's question on the Nunavut Arctic College's recruitment efforts. As the college recently gained the authority to conduct its own recruitment efforts, I was wondering if we can get an update on the success of that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, through you, if you will have Ms. Price respond to the question. Thank you.

Chairman: Ms. Price.

Ms. Price: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks again to the member for his question. The Recruitment Division at the Nunavut Arctic College has been increasing their efforts in supporting a multi-layered recruitment strategy that identifies high school students, but also focuses on supporting adult learners looking to engage in higher learning.

A number of strategies have been implemented even within our current COVID-19 context. This has included meeting with individual high schools through the internet and engaging in conversations about options. There have also been plans for more immediate strategies in our individual campuses, and additional work on updating our promotional items and our website.

There are multiple strategies at play and through each kind of direct contact with communities, these strategies become more effective. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Price. Moving onto my next question, it's come to my attention that the Financial Assistance for Nunavut students provides some generous level of funding and support for students with learning and physical disabilities. This is an item that I've been bringing up with the college for a number of years now; the lack of resources for students with increased levels of needs and supports.

When I found out that FANS has only ever offered this generous support to one student, I was quite surprised, and I was wondering if the college has had any dialogue with the FANS office to identify how to best utilize that funding and assist the college's students. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I recall him asking the Minister of Education about this, and I agreed to get my staff to make sure that this FANS benefit gets to those that need it. Our Student Service Division, I'm sure if they haven't heard of it, they will be hearing of it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. We are on Nunavut Arctic College. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$37,984,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Do members agree we have concluded the review of Nunavut Arctic College?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Closing comments, Minister Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank all the members for their questions and comments. I thank each and every one of my officials here with me today. The exciting work that is happening at the college impacts Nunavummiut in a positive way, so we appreciate the support to date and into the future. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Joanasié. I thank you and your staff for answering the questions from the colleagues. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the visitors.

I will stay here while we set up for the next department. Thank you.

Thank you. I would like to call the committee meeting back to order. Minister Akeegok, please proceed with your opening comments.

Bill 59 – Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, 2021-2022 – Human Resources – Consideration in Committee

Hon. David Akeegok (interpretation): Good evening, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to be here with my colleagues to present the 2021-2022 Main Estimates and 2021-2024 Business Plan for the Department of Human Resources.

(interpretation ends) The Department of Human Resources provides leadership and management support to departments and public bodies in human resource policy, programs and legislative development, Inuit employment planning, Inuit training and development, staffing employee relations, job evaluation, and employee wellness, ensuring that the government human resource process and programs operate within Inuit societal values, and in a fiscally responsible manner.

For 2021-22 the department will have a total operational budget of \$28.2 million, with the majority of three areas; compensation of benefits, of which is \$19 million, service contract of \$4.6 million, and purchase services of \$2.2 million.

Mr. Chairman. we are pleased to share our achievements and our plans to develop and deliver effective and responsive human resource policies, programs, practices and services despite the challenges our department has faced from the impact of COVID-19 global pandemic.

In recognition that a healthy workplace is essential to the wellbeing of all our employees, the Department of Human Resources developed an internal comprehensive and consistent response to the COVID-19 pandemic that followed the recommendations of Nunavut's Chief Public Health Officer while continuing to provide services to Nunavummiut.

Mr. Chairman, as a government, we are committed to meeting our obligations under article 23 of the *Nunavut Agreement* to achieve a representative public service. My department is monitoring the progress of the government-wide Inuit employment plan, and the departments and public bodies are reporting semi-annually on their Inuit employment targets. The government achieved 90% of its short-term goal of 2,040 Inuit full-time equivalent in the first quarter of 2020.

Mr. Chairman, we are committed to a workplace founded in Inuit societal values. Providing a safe and respectful workplace, free from all forms of harassments for all employees is a foundation through *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq*, respecting other relationships and caring for people. To enable this, we have revised the harassment-free workplace directive to increase transparency, communication, and foster the spirit of being open, welcoming and inclusive in the workplace, and for employees to address harassment concerns more conveniently.

As part of the supporting and developing proficiencies in Inuktitut as a working language of our government and revitalizing and sustaining the fluent use of Inuktitut, enhancing and improving our services, (interpretation) my department revised and updated the Inuktitut language incentive policy to remove the five-year mandatory reassessment requirement for employees who have been placed as a designated proficiency level under the Inuktitut language incentive program.

Helping Nunavut Inuit and long-term Nunavut resident students to gain work experience in the public service is a priority for my department. (interpretation ends) As such, we reviewed and amended the summer student employment equity programs, eligibility

criteria, and the definition of a Nunavut student so it is better aligned with the intent of the program, that of giving priority and benefit to Nunavut Inuit and Nunavut students.

Mr. Chairman, our continued effort to offer on-the-job training opportunities for casual Inuit employment to gain the required skills and experience to move into more permanent positions within government are yielding the desired result.

Since April 1, 2020, 55 direct appointments have been completed, 54, which is 98 percent of it, are Nunavut Inuit. Since April 1, 2020, 91 casuals have become indeterminate or term employees. My department completed a workforce review of both casual and relief utilization, as well as casual cycle time and was able to reduce the timeline by three days.

My department has embarked on engaging all departments and public bodies in working collaboratively to reduce overall government vacancy rates by focusing its efforts on positions that have been vacant for longer than two years, where no staffing activity has been undertaken. The long-term goal of this work is to fill these positions, increase Inuit employment, or to re-allocate the funding for such positions in a way that more effectively meets the government's human resource needs.

Mr. Chairman, my department tabled the *Human Resource Strategy 2019-2023* during the fall 2020 session of the Legislative Assembly, and is monitoring its implementation as planned, while being flexible to the COVID-19 global pandemic impact.

We are excited by the success of the Amaqtaarniq Education leave Program, which currently has 15 Inuit employees pursuing various post-secondary credentials to enable them to qualify for professional and management positions in our government.

Mr. Chairman, my department has worked diligently in 2020-21 to fulfill our government's priorities, and we will continue this work in the new fiscal year. (interpretation) Our priorities for 2021-22 include:

- Monitoring the implementation of the Human Resource Strategy 2019-23, and the long-term government-wide Inuit Employment Plan;
- Working with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the Government of Canada on the establishment of a tripartite Inuit Pre-Employment Training Plan Committee;
- (interpretation ends) Exploring organization design to ensure effective human resources management within the public service;
- Continuing and updating human resources policies and programs to increase Inuit employment at all levels of the public service;
- Providing workplace education and training for public servants, with an emphasis on increasing Inuit employment and strong Inuit leaders for the government and the territory
- Implementing an intensive career development program for Inuit with the potential to become executives; and
- Integrating and expanding employee health and wellness programs and initiatives that currently exist with the government.

With that, Mr. Chairman, (interpretation) I conclude my opening comments and I welcome questions from the standing committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Does the chair of the standing committee have comments? Ms. Towntongie.

Ms. Towntongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am the co-chair, otherwise John Main, as the chair would have been reading these comments.

I am pleased to provide opening comments on behalf of the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts on its review of the proposed 2021-22 main estimates and 2021-24 business plan of the Department of Human Resources. (interpretation) The department's proposed 2021-22 operations and maintenance budget is \$28,218,000, this represents a 0.2 percent increase from the 2020-21 fiscal year. The number of positions in the department remains unchanged at 133 person years.

Members raised a number of issues and concerns during the minister's recent appearance before the standing committee. During the Legislative Assembly sitting of October 23, 2018, the Premier Joe Savikataaq announced that the government's current harassment-free workplace policy would be reviewed by a working group involving female deputy ministers, human resources experts and *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* coordinators to ensure it adequately addresses and meets the needs of women who have experienced inappropriate behaviours in the workplace.

(interpretation ends) The standing committee continues to look forward to progress being made in this area, and an updated harassment-free workplace policy being tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

The issue of long-term casuals has been a long-standing issue of concern for members of the Legislative Assembly. On September 9, 2019 the Government of Nunavut issued a news release announcing that the cabinet had issued direction to foster Inuit employment across the public service by substantially increasing the number of direct appointments of long-term casuals.

(interpretation) The standing committee supports this direction and encourages the government's public service annual report to provide detailed updates on the status of the initiative. (interpretation ends) The Department of Human Resources has responsibility in respect to establishing the government over our Inuit employment targets. It is important to acknowledge the progress that has been made to date in increasing Inuit employment within the Government of Nunavut.

Information that's contained in the government's report states that after every four months, the employment report indicates that a total of 1,369 Nunavut Inuit were employed by the government as of December 21, 2005. By December of 2020, that number had increased to 1,832. This represents an increase of approximately 34 percent

over the 15 year period. It is important for the government to develop realistic timetables for achieving full representation across all employment categories in the government.

(interpretation ends) The government's most recent quarterly employment report indicates that as of December 31, 2020, the Government of Nunavut had a total of 5,251 positions, of which 1,832 were filled by Nunavut Inuit. 1,860 positions were filled by non-Nunavut Inuit employees, and 1,558 positions were vacant. In order for the government to achieve an 85 percent Inuit workforce for a fully staffed organization, it needs to hire approximately 2,631 new Nunavut Inuit employees and not lose a single one of its current Nunavut Inuit.

(interpretation) On September 18, 2017 the Government of Nunavut's new Inuit Language Incentive Policy was announced. The policy was most recently updated and renamed on October 15, 2020. Under the policy, the Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit has the responsibility to "develop, review, recommend and administer tests that evaluate Inuit Language proficiency." (interpretation ends) Employees may receive an allowance according to a three-level scale. The standing committee recognizes the appropriateness of requiring employees who are applying for a new and/or higher allowance to undertake an initial assessment. The standing committee is pleased to note that the department acted on its recommendation to remove the five-year mandatory reassessment requirement for employees.

(interpretation) The standing committee strongly supports the government's Summer Student Employment Equity Program, which provides valuable work experience for Nunavut youth. The standing committee is pleased to note that the department acted on its recommendation to review the program's definition of "Nunavut Student" to ensure that only Nunavut Inuit and long-term residents of the territory are eligible to participate in the program.

(interpretation ends) The Government of Nunavut's current Staff Housing Policy was approved in April 2019. It falls under the responsibility of the Department of Human Resources. The department's '21-24 business plan indicates that it has been working "in collaboration with the Department of Finance and the Nunavut Housing Corporation and has contributed to the discussion paper on the development of the proposed Down-Payment Savings Matching Program to encourage employees to save for home purchase." The standing committee looks forward to reviewing further detail concerning this new program

(interpretation) That concludes my opening comments on the proposed 2021-22 Main Estimates and 2021-24 Business Plan of the Department of Human Resources. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Towtongie. Mr. Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move to report progress. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. We have a motion on the floor to report progress and the motion is not debatable. All those in favour of the motion. All those opposed. Motion carried. I will now rise to report progress.

Speaker (interpretation): Good evening. Continuing on. (interpretation ends) Report of the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Akoak.

Item 20: Report of the Committee of the Whole

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 59 and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be agreed to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. There is a motion on the floor. Is there a seconder? Ms. Ehaloak. (interpretation ends) The motion is in order. To the motion.

An Hon. Member (interpretation): Question.

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

(interpretation) Third Reading of Bills. (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 there's a meeting of the Management and Services Board at ten o'clock in the Tuktu Boardroom.

Orders of the Day for March 11:

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
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 58
 - Bill 59
 - Bill 60
 - Bill 61
 - Bill 62
20. Report of the Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
22. Orders of the Day

Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) This House stands adjourned until Thursday, March 11, at 1:30 p.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House adjourned at 18:22*

