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Iqaluit

Speaker: The Honourable Hunter Tootoo, M.L.A.

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

Speaker

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(Iqaluit Centre)

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(Iqaluit East)

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Minister of Executive and
Intergovernmental Affairs; Minister
responsible for Aboriginal Affairs;
Minister responsible for Immigration;
Minister responsible for the Status of
Women*

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(Uqqummiut)

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and Youth; Minister of Environment;
Minister of Languages; Minister
responsible for the Utility Rates Review
Council*

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(Baker Lake)

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(Rankin Inlet North)

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(Quttiktuq)

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Hon. Fred Schell

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Minister responsible for
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Iqaluit, Nunavut**Wednesday, February 22, 2012****Members Present:**

Honourable Eva Aariak, Honourable James Arreak, Mr. Moses Aupaluktuq, Mr. Tagak Curley, Ms. Monica Ell, Mr. Ron Elliott, Mr. Joe Enook, Honourable Lorne Kusugak, Mr. Johnny Ningeongan, Mr. Hezakah Oshutapik, Honourable Keith Peterson, Mr. Allan Rumbolt, Honourable Fred Schell, Honourable Daniel Shewchuk, Mr. Louis Tapardjuk, Honourable Peter Taptuna, Honourable Hunter Tootoo.

>>*House commenced at 13:34*

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Hunter Tootoo):

Qujannamiik, Sergeant-at-Arms. Before we get started, I would like to ask Minister Taptuna if he could start us off with a prayer, please.

>>*Prayer*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Taptuna. (interpretation ends) I'll start off with a wink for everybody today. Moving on in the orders of the day. Item 2. Budget Address. Minister of Finance, Minister Peterson.

Item 2: Ministers' Statements**Minister's Statement 112 – 3(3):
Budget Address 2012-2013**

Hon. Keith Peterson: Mr. Speaker, I rise to present this government's budget for the coming fiscal year.

In my first budget speech, I said that this government was moving forward prudently in building a sustainable

territory. At the time, the global economy had just plunged into a serious recession. A cautious approach seemed best. Prudence was the central idea for the second and third budgets and it remains my policy today.

With the passage of time, Mr. Speaker, we can see that this cautious approach of prudent financial management can build a solid foundation for our future. In this sensible approach, we live within our means, continuously improve our financial management, use debt appropriately, and plan for the future that we desire and deserve. Our sensible approach is paying dividends. Today we project a small surplus for the year ahead.

Here is our fiscal situation. For the current year, we project spending of \$1.45 billion and revenues at \$1.37 billion. In my last budget, I anticipated a deficit of \$50 million. Today, including adjustments for revolving funds, capital plan carryovers, and our \$25 million contingencies fund, I expect the deficit could fall to \$34 million.

Next year, the government plans to spend \$1.34 billion and to receive \$1.47 billion. After adjustments for revolving funds, capital plan carryovers, and contingencies, we forecast a surplus of \$37.7 million. Moreover, the contingency fund, set at \$78 million, cushions our surplus. Our forecast surplus depends on our ability to collect our anticipated revenues and to control our spending.

I will address the spending issues in a few minutes. On the revenue side, we face two risks: the first, the federal government could change our financial

arrangements; the second, the economy might not grow as we have forecast.

Fully 92 percent of our revenue comes to us from the federal government. The territorial formula financing arrangement accounts for 86 percent of our revenue. With a devolution agreement, we could reduce our dependence on the federal government. Until that time, this arrangement will remain our primary source of funds. I can assure the House that discussions on renewing our arrangement beyond 2014 are progressing well. We have received assurances from the federal government that the renewal will occur with no cutbacks. We look forward to concluding a new agreement that transparently reflects our real expenditure needs.

While the first risk appears minimal, we cannot say the same about the second. The Nunavut economy has grown strongly over the long term, averaging 4.5 percent per year. Our economy will have doubled in little more than a decade, but our growth year over year is volatile. With a short construction season, large projects can slip from one year into the next, which affects the timing of our revenues.

There is also uncertainty about the mining sector. Although the Meadowbank gold mine is operating, Newmont has put its Hope Bay gold mine on hold. At the same time, exploration continues elsewhere. Overall, I am encouraged by our very real potential. Ultimately, mining investment will probably accelerate, producing jobs and revenue. Until then, however, we must remain vigilant about our fiscal situation.

Looking beyond the current situation, let me discuss the approach that this government has chosen toward the remainder of our mandate. The term of this Legislative Assembly will expire in about 18 months. During this time, our government will continue to pursue the objectives defined in the *Tamapta* Action Plan. Generally, I group our work under four headings: an improved financial management, a better quality of life, a sustainable approach to development, and an improved ability to define, enable, and manage our collective growth.

Improved financial management tops my list. We are steadily improving our ability to manage taxpayers' dollars and will improve further. This improved capacity is crucial to our long-term goals for development and it is essential if we are to realize our full potential as a self-governing people.

Our government worked closely with the federal government and the Office of the Auditor General. We upgraded computer systems and networks, improved reporting mechanisms, and strengthened managers' skills. Today we are better able to set fiscal targets with greater confidence that they will be achieved. Already this approach has delivered benefits.

The *Nunavut Act* requires us to table our financial statements for each year by December 31. This means that we have nine months to table audited statements. I'm pleased to report that we received an unqualified opinion from the Auditor General on December 5. In meeting the statutory deadline, we have made very real progress. I would invite members to

recognize the excellent work performed by our public service.

Looking ahead, we will rebuild our depleted cash balances while continuing to provide Nunavummiut with proper services. We will establish a fiscal policy that defines our path two or three years forward, enabling us to make better decisions. We will continue to respect the principles of openness and transparency so that Nunavummiut can see our objectives and follow our progress.

Our improved financial management will better enable Nunavut to grow and prosper. In managing public money properly, we show that we are ready to take charge of our future.

Improved financial management also gives us confidence in managing our debt. This is important. As we develop Nunavut, we will incur more debt. Today we face a debt ceiling that will soon limit our growth.

As members know, the government cannot borrow more than \$200 million. This limit was set by the *Nunavut Act*, a federal law. The limit has not risen ever. At the end of December, our debt exposure reached about \$140 million. Let us be clear that the issue is not government spending. In running a balanced budget, we create no debt. However, the government does use debt to finance three territorial corporations. As these corporations have grown, so has our debt exposure. This exposure will rise further if we use debt for our future infrastructure needs.

The House has approved new capital spending of \$95 million for next year. This includes new investments of nearly

\$18 million for schools and other educational facilities, \$16 million for housing, and nearly \$31 million in public buildings and facilities. This \$95 million plus a \$45 million carryover from this year's budget will make about \$140 million available next year.

>>*Applause*

Our infrastructure deficit, however, greatly exceeds this amount. Just one project, the Iqaluit airport upgrade, would punch right through the current debt ceiling. Having surveyed all communities about their capital needs, the Department of Community and Government Services thinks we would need to spend about \$6 billion over 20 years.

In building a solid foundation for our future, we would need to double, even triple, our annual capital plan. We cannot do this within our current budget. Accordingly, we look forward to discussing investment partnerships with the federal government and the private sector, and we are discussing with the federal government an increase in our debt limit.

Our improved financial management gives us confidence that we can manage a larger debt without compromising programs and services. Improving these programs and services is also an important priority. We are focused on helping Nunavummiut to improve our quality of life. By that I mean our general well-being. Our government will improve housing, fight poverty, and enable healthier lives.

To be clear, we have no greater challenge than housing. According to the

Nunavut Housing Needs Survey, Nunavut needs nearly 3,600 housing units to address homelessness, overcrowding, and major repairs. Each year, this number will rise by 90 housing units. Our government faces this need with limited financial resources.

We allocated the Nunavut Housing Corporation an additional \$10.6 million next year, for a total budget of \$158 million. The corporation will increase its support for public housing by \$11 million and staff housing by \$1.8 million. Most of these funds will cover the cost of utilities and maintenance.

We would prefer to build new housing, but it would take well over \$1 billion to address our current housing needs. Accordingly, we will promote the benefits of private homeownership as well as greater private sector involvement in building homes. At the same time, the housing corporation will continue to advocate for a renewed federal investment.

Beyond the housing crisis, we must also tackle the serious issue of crime. According to Statistics Canada, our violent crime rate in 2010 rose nearly 10 percent. In pursuit of making our communities safer, the RCMP is working to tackle the sources of crime. They have engaged a crime analyst to compile intelligence and crime statistics. We are close to concluding an agreement to renew the RCMP policing contract. The current agreement expires at the end of next month.

Mr. Speaker, poverty and hunger remain important challenges. Too many Nunavummiut are living with too little food. According to a recent McGill

University study, six in ten people live in homes whose food supply has failed. In the coming year, this government will convene a national food security coalition. With partner organizations, we will secure the food supply through better access to country foods and new programs for breakfast and lunch at school. If our children hunger for anything, it should be for knowledge. We will also move forward as promised with legislation to implement the Poverty Reduction Action Plan before the end of this mandate.

In addition to meeting the challenges of housing, poverty, and hunger, we face the test of providing Nunavummiut with better health care and social services. The Department of Health and Social Services will receive an additional \$19 million next year to cover increasing costs in almost all areas of operation. Its budget, rising 6 percent to nearly \$317 million, is larger than that of any other department.

A health care system that is efficient and effective should enable better health through treatment and prevention and, at the same time, keep costs under control. A social services system should help people to become self-sufficient. In Nunavut, this is far from easy. Our health indicators often fall far below the Canadian average and we face troubling rates of child abuse, family violence, and suicide.

We recognize that addictions are a significant problem and will launch a pilot treatment program this spring. Participants from across the Kitikmeot region will receive 28 days of residential care. We will use an existing building in Cambridge Bay and support the project

through my department's Mental Health and Addictions Division. The program will include family counselling, education, and follow-up, services that, although badly needed, are not available now. If the program succeeds, we will take it into more communities. I am looking forward to the results. Drugs, alcohol, and gambling are leading contributors to our social problems. They deny opportunities for Nunavummiut to lead healthy, rewarding lives. We need this addictions program to make a real difference.

We will also need to take a close look at the role of liquor in our communities. My liquor task force will soon complete its extensive consultations with all communities. I will give the report the serious consideration that it deserves.

This government will also act to reduce tobacco consumption. Our lung cancer rates far exceed the Canadian average. Heart disease, stroke, and tuberculosis rob Nunavummiut of their future and are very expensive to treat. Nunavummiut must smoke less. We will help.

>> *Applause*

We will increase the tax on tobacco products to further support our campaign against their use. We will raise the tax by 4 cents per cigarette, or \$1 per pack of 25. The tax on loose tobacco will rise from 14 cents per gram to 20 cents per gram. Based on current consumption, these measures will produce additional revenue next year of \$3 million. We will use a portion of these new revenues for smoking prevention and cessation programs.

These measures to improve our quality of life, backed by our efforts to improve financial management, should contribute significantly to our progress. As we pursue these priorities, we must ensure that our approach is sustainable. By this I mean that we manage our resources both for today and for the future.

When we combine the best available scientific knowledge with Inuit societal values, we know that the decisions that benefit us today will also benefit our descendants well into the future. This is why proper management of renewable resources matters for Nunavut and why we must do a better job of explaining our actions beyond our borders.

The price of misunderstanding can be high, as we saw in European decisions about our sealing industry. To improve awareness and understanding, the environment department will launch a communications campaign to explain our sustainable development approach. To better protect the economic contribution of our harvesting sector, we will expand our efforts to ensure that foreign audiences better understand our wildlife management practices.

Mr. Speaker, I have described three of our priorities: sustainable development, improved quality of life, and better financial management. In pursuing all of these, we also see the need to build our capacity. Within government, this means that we will improve our ability to provide Nunavummiut with programs and services. More broadly, capacity building means we will help to equip Nunavummiut with the skills, knowledge, and ability to build happy and rewarding lives. In this pursuit, education plays an important role.

In the coming year, the Department of Education will receive an additional \$8 million, an increase of nearly 4 percent. Teachers will receive most of this increase, in line with their recent collective agreement. The education department will also improve programs for early childhood development and plan to engage parents as key partners in the education of their children. The department has also created a mature graduation program. It will help more adults to complete high school and qualify for post-secondary education and training opportunities.

In addition to education, the Inuit language also plays an important role in our plan. This government remains committed to implementing fully the *Inuit Language Protection Act* and the *Official Languages Act*. The Minister of Languages tabled the proposed *Uqausivut* Implementation Plan eight months ago and has been reviewing public comments. This government expects to bring the final implementation plan to this House during the spring session. This government is also working to promote the Inuit language and cultural values in all territorial institutions. The departments of Human Resources and Culture, Language, Elders and Youth are developing a language policy for the public service. It will include provisions on the right to work in the Inuit language.

We will also strengthen the public service by ensuring that our government's structure and procedures are effective and efficient in the pursuit of our priorities and goals. The government proposes to transfer the sport and recreation responsibilities of the Department of Culture, Languages,

Elders and Youth to the Department of Community and Government Services. Nunavut Arctic College would take over responsibility for the Piquqsilirivvik Cultural School. Lastly, the Energy Secretariat, housed in the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, would transfer into the Department of Economic Development and Transportation. We will ask this House to approve these changes through a supplementary appropriation.

As well, the government is examining whether to divide the Department of Health and Social Services into two distinct departments. The Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts recommended this restructuring. I have received a consultant's report on this matter and forwarded it to all members. The government is considering how best to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, there are two other areas in which we will strengthen the public service. First, this government will ensure that we provide Nunavummiut with better information about how we work on their behalf. Several departments will strengthen their ability to meet the public's information needs. The communications group in the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs will act as a central resource. It will support other departments, identify staffing needs, and provide leadership and guidance. The government will also improve its websites and complete the process of placing bilingual government liaison officers in all communities.

In strengthening the public service, we will also address fairness in government

procurement. We will ensure that the government properly applies the goals of the NNI Policy. In public procurement, Inuit firms and entrepreneurs should have a reasonable prospect of winning bids. We have heard from Nunavut contractors that there is a real need to rewrite our policy in plain language that is clearly understood and consistently applied. This government will review the NNI Policy in consultation with Nunavut Tunngavik. We will ensure the policy complies with Article 24 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, in these four areas, we see our priorities for the remainder of our mandate. We will work to improve our capacity to manage our collective growth. We will pursue a sustainable approach to development. We will work to improve our quality of life. And we will continue to improve our financial management. I am encouraged by our progress in each of these areas. The picture is increasingly positive.

This government has exercised a cautious approach to the use of public money and property. Our approach has been proven correct. We have learned to manage better and we have steadily improved the programs and services that we provide to Nunavummiut. We still face large challenges, especially in housing and infrastructure, but we are increasingly able to meet these challenges in partnership with Nunavummiut, private industry, and the federal government.

I look forward to working with all members to make real progress for Nunavummiut. Increasingly, the goals of *Tamapta* lie within our reach. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Item 3. Ministers' Statements. Item 4. Members' Statements. Member for Rankin Inlet North, Mr. Curley.

Item 4: Members' Statements

Member's Statement 155 – 3(3): Polar Bear Population is not Decreasing

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you. I would like to say "good afternoon" to all the people of Rankin Inlet and the listening public. I am quite pleased that the Minister of Finance delivered the Budget Address as we will be better able to understand our upcoming issues.

I rise today to talk about a common concern held throughout Nunavut surrounding the knowledge of our elders and hunters. The reason I rise today is to speak to the issue surrounding polar bears and what the position of Inuit are with respect to this controversy. What I want to state is for the benefit of the people listening. Our elders and hunters inform us about the polar bears throughout Nunavut and everywhere. The same assessment is being stated that the polar bear population is ever increasing.

Southerners like to state that polar bears are at risk or even an endangered species and they have been threatening to place the polar bear as a species at risk, as per the *Species at Risk Act*. I want Nunavummiut to note that the southerners are mistaken in their assumption, primarily because they believe future climate change will cause this. It is not true and as a matter of fact, it is irresponsible because they believe

the populations are decreasing. That is not the case and is an untruth.

The only reason why they are adamant about this is because of the animal rights activists, who are using the polar bear as their icon for climate change. Since the polar bear is considered loveable and due to their status as tourism draws for worldwide animal lovers, Mr. Speaker, they believe the lies of these organizations. I wanted to state that this is an unfounded assumption.

The polar bear population is increasing in Nunavut and in Canada. That is a scientific fact. Ever since we can recall, many elders have continued to maintain that polar bears are increasing and areas that never harboured polar bears now are part of their habitat. The result is that it has become rather dangerous to enjoy the outdoors during the summer if you are going to try to use tents as a camp. Ever since they have started to keep count, the numbers keep increasing.

In the beginning, there were just two when Moses placed the animals two by two into his ark. To date, they continue to increase and they are still growing up to now. That is the record that has to be believed by our fellow Canadians. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Members' Statements. Member for Baker Lake, Mr. Aupaluktuq.

Member's Statement 156 – 3(3): Need for Strategic Infrastructure Investments in Baker Lake

Mr. Aupaluktuq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address the need

for strategic infrastructure investments in Baker Lake.

Mr. Speaker, as I noted in my Member's Statement yesterday, these are exciting times for economic development in the Kivalliq.

In discussions with my constituents about Baker Lake's needs and goals, a number of priorities have been identified.

Mr. Speaker, strategic transportation infrastructure is essential for supporting the type of economic activity that is characterizing the Kivalliq today.

Over the last several years, there have been improvements made to Baker Lake's airport. However, a new airport continues to be the goal of the community and I urge the Government of Nunavut to work closely with the federal government on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister of Canada and other federal leaders recently visited Baker Lake, I personally raised the idea of expanded port facilities for the community.

Mr. Speaker, we must not forget that essential infrastructure also includes facilities that support human wellness and potential.

According to the 2011 census data that has recently been released by Statistics Canada, Baker Lake's population is approaching 2,000. We are now the fourth largest community in Nunavut. Baker Lake is looking forward to a new middle school and I urge the Department of Health and Social Services to take a closer look at whether our community's

health centre is adequate to the needs of our rapidly growing population.

Mr. Speaker, making the right investments now will help pay great dividends in the future. I urge our government to act with vision and determination. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Aupaluktuq. Members' Statements. Member for Pangnirtung, Mr. Oshutapik.

**Member's Statement 157 – 3(3):
Congratulations to Arctic Winter
Games Participants**

Mr. Oshutapik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge and congratulate a number of young people from my constituency who recently took part in the regional trials prior to the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse, Yukon. They participated in the hockey tryouts even though our local arena was not even ready as it had no ice. Although they were not able to practice, they still went for the hockey tryouts. There were six hockey players who partook in the tryouts and I want to recognize them.

Mr. Speaker, several athletes were successful in making the team that will represent Nunavut at the winter games. Kaley Machmer, Joanasie Dialla, Bobby Dialla, Joseph Kilabuk, Aimo Kilabuk, and Stevie Alivaktuk are the individuals who tried out. Only some of them succeeded in making the team, even though they were not able to practise beforehand. Some of these individuals will be participating, so I want to share my congratulations with my colleagues.

Corey Alivaktuk succeeded in making the team in the bantam category and Mary Rose Kilabuk was also successful in making the team in the girl's division. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to inform you that Joanasie Dialla, Joseph Kilabuk, Corey Alivaktuk, and Mary Rose Kilabuk were selected to take part in the Arctic Winter Games and they are on their way to Whitehorse next month.

I seek unanimous consent to continue with my statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Oshutapik. The member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Please proceed.

Mr. Oshutapik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Providing our youth with recreational opportunities and facilities is an important part of supporting healthy lifestyles in our communities. I will continue to support appropriate investments for such initiatives as bringing artificial ice into our arena.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Pangnirtung youth athletes who will do us proud at the Arctic Winter Games. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Oshutapik. I, too, wish those athletes the best of luck at the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse. Members' Statements. Member for Quttiktuq, Mr. Elliott.

**Member's Statement 158 – 3(3):
Successes of the Community
Access Program**

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge and applaud the good work and successes of the Community Access Program over the past two decades.

Mr. Speaker, I became involved with the Community Access Program in 1993 when I worked with a group of Arctic Bay residents to access federal funding from Industry Canada which would help bring public Internet service to the High Arctic.

Mr. Speaker, the Nunavut Community Access Program, or NCAP, has come a long way since those days. Gradually, funding was leveraged from a number of sources, including the Government of Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the GN's current CAP Administrator, Darlene Thompson, who works many long and devoted hours.

Mr. Speaker, there are currently 24 CAP sites in 20 Nunavut communities. These sites are run by various different entities, such as community libraries, or organizations, such as the Ilisarsivik Society in Clyde River. The fact that these sites are so heavily used, sometimes even necessitating time limits on users, is a testament to their success.

Mr. Speaker, as society evolves, the skill and competency of individuals using computers and accessing the Internet has a direct impact on their employability.

Mr. Speaker, I would further note that every year, at least 30 or 40 youth workers are hired and trained at campsites in Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will be tabling a book, *The Road We Travelled*, which contains stories from across Nunavut and across Canada that illustrates the best practices in adult learning of information and communication technologies in remote, rural, and aboriginal communities.

Mr. Speaker, the Nunavut Community Access Program supports many sites and activities across the territory. It also delivers the Computers for Schools program on behalf of Industry Canada. Unfortunately, it seems that Industry Canada may not continue funding this initiative in the near future. I call upon the government to make every effort to support the ongoing success of the Nunavut Community Access Program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Members' Statements. Member for Kugluktuk, Mr. Taptuna.

**Member's Statement 159 – 3(3):
Women in Action: Steps of Hope**

Hon. Peter Taptuna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to share an important initiative that is currently being planned by the members of the cancer awareness campaign called "Women in Action: Steps of Hope." This is an initiative that is gaining momentum in the Kitikmeot and also in Iqaluit. This involves women working together to raise a sum of monies to

support cancer research and healthy living.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative is being led by the Hon. Commissioner of Nunavut, Edna Elias, who was inspired to make this walk since losing friends and family to cancer. She will be making this walk this spring. Commissioner Elias will be joined by her sister Jeannie Ehaloak, friends Donna Olsen-Hakongak, Elisabeth Hadlari, Crystal Qaumariaq of Cambridge Bay, Jamie McInnis of Calgary, and most recently, Janet Brewster of Iqaluit.

Mr. Speaker, the term “Women in Action” represents women working together to coordinate events involving fundraising in the communities, while the term “Steps of Hope” refers to the women making a trek which creates or draws our attention to the matter of making efforts that we must all strive to make and try to live healthy.

Mr. Speaker, fundraising events have consisted of penny carnivals, soup lines, and soon, my community of Kugluktuk will be hosting a dinner auction for this very important cause, while Cambridge Bay is gearing up for more soup and chilli lines, as small examples of what’s been happening within these Kitikmeot communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time in the House today to congratulate the women involved in this venture and draw your attention to this very important initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I wish all those the very best success in their past fundraisers and trekkers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Taptuna. Members’ Statements. Member for Tununiq, Mr. Enook.

**Member’s Statement 160 – 3(3):
Appreciation for Truth and
Reconciliation Commission
Process**

Mr. Enook (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, people of Pond Inlet and Nunavut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend thanks and appreciation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the visit to the community of Pond Inlet in early February 2012.

Mr. Speaker, one of the roles of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to document the truths of survivors, families, communities, and anyone personally affected by the residential school experience.

(interpretation ends) The commission plays an important role in providing opportunities for survivors to share their experiences. Describing the memories can be emotionally difficult but it is a step towards putting the past behind us and working towards a stronger and healthier future.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members of the Truth and Reconciliation Inuit sub-commission, Jennifer Hunt-Poitras and Robbie Watt, who came to the community of Pond Inlet to hear the stories of our survivors.

(interpretation) Mr. Speaker, over the two-day visit, 34 statements were

collected as many individuals shared their stories and their pain.

Mr. Speaker, this event was an important step for many who wish for a healthier future. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the important role they are playing in this process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Enook. Members' Statements. Member for Nanulik, Mr. Ningeongan.

**Member's Statement 161 – 3(3):
Thoughts and Prayers for Coral
Harbour Residents at a Time of
Loss**

Mr. Ningeongan (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to wish a good afternoon to the residents of Chesterfield Inlet and fellow residents in Coral Harbour.

Mr. Speaker, my fellow residents in Coral Harbour are grieving over the loss of a community member. As they mourn their loss and are grieving, they are in my thoughts and I will remember them in my prayers. I sympathize and support you, and I hope that you will overcome these trying times and that you will eventually overcome your grief. You are in my thoughts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Ningeongan. Members' Statements. Moving on in the orders of the day. Item 5. Returns to Oral Questions. Item 6. Recognition of

Visitors in the Gallery. Member for Arviat, Mr. Shewchuk.

**Item 6: Recognition of Visitors in the
Gallery**

Hon. Daniel Shewchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize three of my constituents from Arviat who are in the House today. I would like to recognize Mike Illnik and Jackie Otuk, who are both here working with the Nunavut Housing Corporation and also here as representatives for employees of the Nunavut Employees Union. Mr. Speaker, I would like to also recognize Susie Johnson, who is in the House with us today, a teacher at the John Arnalukjuak High School, who is here chaperoning our pages. I welcome you all to the Gallery. Thank you.

>>Applause

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Shewchuk. We welcome you to the Gallery. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Member for Cambridge Bay, Mr. Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to welcome to the Gallery the Deputy Minister of Finance, Chris D'Arcy, sitting right behind me here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Welcome to the Gallery. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Member for Rankin Inlet South and Whale Cove, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish a very good day to the residents of Whale Cove and Rankin Inlet. I am quite pleased to be able to recognize fellow residents of Rankin Inlet. One of the people here is someone I spent my childhood growing up with and I just used to know her as Qavangat. I would like to welcome Leonie Barry to the Gallery. I hope you enjoy your stay here in Iqaluit.

>>Applause

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Kusugak. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Member for Iqaluit West, Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This person is a fellow resident of Iqaluit with whom I have participated on different boards and agencies and as employees of other bodies. I want to acknowledge the person who serves in the capacity of the President of NEU, Mr. Doug Workman. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Ell. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize someone who used to work here in the precinct, Nikki Eegeesiak, sitting over there on my right. Welcome to the Gallery, Nikki. Welcome back. I also extend a warm welcome to the rest, I believe, of the collective bargaining team for the Nunavut Employees Union. Welcome to the Gallery.

Moving on in the orders of the day. Item 7. Oral Questions. Member for Rankin Inlet North, Mr. Curley.

Item 7: Oral Questions

Question 231 – 3(3): Government of Nunavut Contracting Practices

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am rising again today to continue with the line of questioning I directed yesterday to the minister responsible for the contracting activities of the Petroleum Products Division of the government.

On December 11, 2011, the NNI Contracting Appeals Board, which includes representatives from the government, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the business community, issued a decision concerning the department's awarding of the fuel distribution contract in the community of Coral Harbour. The appeals board identified a number of problems with the contracting process and recommended that the contract be terminated.

For the benefit of the listening public in Nunavut, can the minister clearly explain why his department decided earlier this week to reject the recommendation of the appeals board and can he clarify if he made the final decision in this matter? Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister responsible for Community and Government Services, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you. I wish to thank the member as well, for raising those questions, the representative for Rankin Inlet. He raised a number of questions, so I will answer one of them. There weren't very

many cases reviewed as per the issue raised in his question.

The NNI appeals board only reviewed three cases, for which we received their recommendations. We approved of two of their recommendations, but rejected their third recommendation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Your first supplementary, Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The main question was with respect to why the recommendation, specifically the third one, was not approved. This is for the benefit of the Nunavummiut, who are listening and who want to clearly understand the process.

Furthermore, within the letter responding to the question I raised, which became public knowledge once tabled, the government response from the deputy minister was, and I quote, "sought the advice of outside legal counsel" in reviewing the recommendations of the NNI Contracting Appeals Board. The actions of the appeals board were exemplary as they were just undertaking the mandate given to them to review the appeal. It states that the appeals were very understandable and it speaks for itself.

Can the minister inform us as to which outside law firm was retained for this legal advice and what was the cost that the government incurred to retain this outside legal counsel? Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister responsible for Community and

Government Services, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not intentionally ignoring your multiple questions, but you just raised three more questions.

With respect to the first question you brought up, you asked me what the reasoning was for rejecting the recommendation of the NNI board for termination of the contract. The NNI Contracting Appeals Board was not unanimous in their review of the recommendation, but we will not be terminating the contract as per their recommendation. The Nunavut government believes that contracts that were awarded were in accordance with contracting policy.

Further, in our estimation, the appeals board was correct in their assessment and due to that reason, the government didn't want to terminate the contract that had already been awarded. Our position was that the procedures were followed properly in relation to the awarding of the contract and that is why this contract was not terminated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Just to clarify, there were two questions there, not three, and you can choose to answer one or both. It's up to you. Again, just to remind members for clarity, for your own benefit to get the responses that you're looking for, try to keep it at one question at a time, and then we won't have to worry about miscounting questions.

Your second supplementary, Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley: Thank you. Yes, I noted with the preamble that the earlier question was ignored.

(interpretation) Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is perfectly evident that there are serious inconsistencies with the government's approach to contracting and procurements. Last year, the NNI Contracting Appeals Board also issued a number of recommendations in the matter of the awarding of the contract for Kitikmeot air ambulance services. In this case, however, the government was happy with the recommendations.

Can the minister explain how the business community in Nunavut can have confidence in the government's contracting and procurement system given that the government seems prepared to ignore the recommendations of the contracting appeals board when it does not like certain advice? Can the minister explain why Nunavutmiut should have confidence in the government? Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. That was one question. Minister of Community and Government Services, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation) As you are quite well aware, under the government's contracting and procurement system, once a contract has been tendered, we have to abide by all of the rules under the system. There are specific rules to be followed for any contract that the government tenders.

(interpretation ends) All contracting procedures are followed very closely. All decisions are made following the

contracting procedures that are put out by this government. The departments that are seeking contract services give our department the criteria for which they are looking for those contracts. All legal contracting procedures are followed to the letter of the law. I could assure the member that there is no political interference whatsoever when contracts are awarded. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Your final supplementary, Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you. What Nunavutmiut are starting to notice is that the government treats contractors differently, as per my statement earlier, and that is why I raised that question.

As per my preamble earlier, I also had questions about the Petroleum Products Division under the minister's department. Can the minister explain what happened to the former director of this division in our community of Rankin Inlet? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister responsible for Community and Government Services, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): When speaking of any employees within the public service of our government, some of them resign while others retire from their positions. The deputy ministers deal with human resource issues. I don't want to get into the details in this House as it was handled by the proper authorities, including the deputy minister of the department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Oral Questions. Member for Hudson Bay, Mr. Rumbolt.

Question 232 – 3(3): Status of Exams for Sanikiluaq High School Students

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education.

I was very concerned to learn that a number of Sanikiluaq's high school students, students who are looking forward to graduating and some even hoping to go on to post-secondary studies, may now have their dreams delayed due to a bureaucratic error.

Apparently, Sanikiluaq high school students were unable to take their English departmental exams last month because someone forgot to update the Alberta testing division of Sanikiluaq's new school name. Can the minister confirm that she is aware of this situation and explain exactly how an error of this nature could have occurred? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Rumbolt. Minister responsible for Education, Madam Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank the member from Sanikiluaq for asking about that matter. I'm not aware of the situation, so I will have to request more information on the matter. Educational issues are indeed very important and I totally understand the member's concern. I will have to get back to the member after I have looked into that issue. Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Aariak. Your first supplementary, Mr. Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Both teachers and students worked long and hard to prepare for these exams only to be failed by bureaucracy. Can the minister update this House on what steps are being taken to ensure that Sanikiluaq high school students will be able to take their English departmental exams at the earliest possible opportunity? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Rumbolt. Minister responsible for Education, Madam Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, I was not aware of that. I am very concerned about the concern that the member has as well, so I will get those details and get back to him as soon as I can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Madam Minister. Oral Questions. Member for Pangnirtung, Mr. Oshutapik.

Question 233 – 3(3): Medical Escort Policy

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

My question relates to wanting more clarification for Nunavummiut and my fellow residents of Pangnirtung so that they can understand more about the issue of patient escorts. I would like to know what the escort policy speaks to. That is my first question on what kind of escort policies you use for medical patient escorts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Oshutapik. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Mr. Oshutapik for the question. Mr. Speaker, there are two types of medical escorts: there's a medical escort that is provided by a physician or nurse and there's a client escort that might be an adult to a family member who would accompany the patient.

Normally, the decision would be made by the attending physician or health professional who recommends who should receive an escort. I believe, in certain circumstances, if you're a unilingual elder, you would probably require an escort. If you're in medical difficulty, you would probably receive an escort. It's quite complicated, but I assure you that the health professionals, health centres, and the hospitals are quite proficient in making decisions on who should get an escort. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Your first supplementary, Mr. Oshutapik.

Mr. Oshutapik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for responding on the matter I wanted clarification on. However, with respect to the various communities, people are starting to believe that there are different policies applied to different communities. The policy applied to our community seems to be inconsistent as some patients can be escorted while others are unable to be provided escorts.

I would like to cite this example. It has been close to two years since my mother, who personally raised me, who cannot speak a word of English and also cannot read syllabics as she never learned how to read and write, was sent to Ottawa without an escort. Several patients with the same lack of language have subsequently also been sent down without an escort and it isn't always due to old age. People who are sick generally know where the pain is emanating from and although they have stated that they don't want to be sent out alone, they are sent out without an escort.

That is why I raised the issue regarding the escort policy and what is followed. The regional staff ought to apply this policy consistently and I would prefer if they could be directed to follow the policy. I would also like to ask if there can be some type of ombudsman or appeals committee that could be struck to review these types of cases. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Oshutapik. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Mr. Oshutapik. I'll get his name correct one of these days. I agree that the policy is there. It is a policy that governs the health and social services, health centres, and hospitals. It is to apply to all people who may or may not require a medical escort.

I can't speak to specific issues, but if there are problems in communities where an individual is unilingual or an elder is not receiving a medical escort, then that person should bring it to the attention of the nurse-in-charge, who

would bring it to the attention of the executive director for the region.

I do believe it is consistent and I will instruct the department to ensure that the nurses and other officials who work with that policy understand that it is to be applied consistently and uniformly across the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Your second supplementary, Mr. Oshutapik.

Mr. Oshutapik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for his answer to my question. Our communities are disparate, both in geography and distance, which includes the distances involved in travelling to hospitals.

In our community, another instance I am aware of which I want to raise another question on for my supplementary question is when some medical patients have seen their doctor and are cleared to travel home, they find that their travel arrangements have not been finalized when their travel dates come up.

Some patients relate that they experience problems at a time when their bodies are healing and they want to return home as most people prefer to be with their families. Difficulties have arisen with their travel arrangements and some have problems with passenger seat availability. Due to excess seating, some patients encounter problems. If I were a patient being told that I cannot travel due to a lack of seats, I would be indignant, at least personally. There are patients who have experienced this.

When the airline is overbooked, the patient who is supposed to be on the plane is usually bumped off.

Additionally, another excuse used is that their airline tickets weren't arranged. Who is responsible for resolving this problem? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Oshutapik. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Mr. Oshutapik for raising those concerns. I apologize for inconveniences and problems that your constituents may be having in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know the exact title for their jobs, but I think there are two medical travel coordinators at the Qikiqtani General Hospital and two here in town. The office was in Pangnirtung and I think the positions were transferred here. They should be able to coordinate all the travel. If you're at the Larga home in Ottawa, they should be able to help the travellers as well. If there's an issue, I believe there's a 1-800 number they can call and someone will assist them. If they get home or if they get stranded somewhere, they should be able to call that 1-800 number and get some assistance.

Also in the department, we have what we call client travel coordinators who, if there are complaints about the service or suggestions on how to improve it, can also assist the people. The concerns are duly noted and my officials will look into how to improve it. I just want to mention as well that I believe the Medical Travel Policy is under review right now. The current policy expires at

the end of March 2012. So I think there's a review underway to try to improve it even more than it is.

I should mention too and I know that this is a large number, but there are approximately 40,000 one-way tickets issued for medical travel in Nunavut every year. It's unfortunate that some people have problems because of weather, planes going mechanical, and things happen, and it disrupts people's travel plans. I'm fairly sure we have all experienced that, but if your constituents have problems, they should be able to be helped. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Your final supplementary, Mr. Oshutapik.

Mr. Oshutapik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I, along with those on whose behalf I raised the question, will expect to see the completed review on the escort policy after March.

This being my last supplementary, quite a number of us elected members require corrective eyewear. In our community, the eye doctors, simply due to the number of communities, only come in occasionally, even though many residents of our community are numerous and on the occasion they arrive, the appointments are already overbooked. It takes perhaps just one day or sometimes two days after the optometrist's arrival that their schedule is already full and this occupies their entire visit.

Many people have outdated prescriptions as they haven't had eye exams for over two years and longer in some cases. I

imagine that you can't sympathize as your prescription would be up to date due to the ease of seeing an eye doctor. With respect to optometrists' visits to communities, who is responsible for their scheduling? Is this part of your department's responsibilities?

I would like to ask for additional visits, but as I'm on my last supplementary, perhaps I ought to set up a meeting with the minister directly to deal with this issue. If you're willing to respond, that's fine. I want to ask if the visits can be extended in our communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Oshutapik. I just want to remind members that the supplementary questions have to fall in line with their original questions and that was a different topic, so I'll move on. Oral Questions. Member for Quttiktuq, Mr. Elliott.

Question 234 – 3(3): Forensic Audit of Nunavut Housing Corporation

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, when the minister was on this side of the House, he called for a forensic audit regarding the Nunavut Housing Corporation's over-commitment to the Nunavut Housing Trust and affordable housing initiative. Can the minister advise us if this will occur? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Rumbolt. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Schell.

Hon. Fred Schell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Elliott, for that question. Yes, we are in the works of doing that and the housing board is in agreement with it. We're going to use the same firm that did the original audit, but it's going to be a little more detailed on exactly what happened on those two programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Schell. Your first supplementary, Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been many months since this over-commitment actually occurred. Can the minister clarify what his department hopes a forensic audit will achieve at this time? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Schell.

Hon. Fred Schell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Basically what we're looking at is to see what actually happened, other than just the housing kept on saying that it was an over-commitment. I believe there are other issues. We're not on a witch hunt to blame anybody for it, but if there were mistakes made, we want to know what the mistakes are and hopefully they won't happen again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Schell. Your second supplementary, Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of trying to find out what the problems were with the Nunavut housing over-commitment, I'm a little confused and maybe would like a little more clarification on it.

I know the Office of the Auditor General did their report on what happened in terms of how spending was within the corporation. For the last couple of years, we have been told by different ministers that things are on track from the audit and lessons were learned, and then there will be no more overspending, yet now we are doing the forensic audit.

Maybe you could just clarify what exactly is hoped to be gained in terms of difference from what the Auditor General was actually saying. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Elliott. I apologize for calling you Mr. Rumbolt off the bat. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Schell.

Hon. Fred Schell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Basically what we're looking at is not at the finances and how the money was spent. We're going to determine what decisions were made and if the right decisions were made as to, number one, the type of housing that was selected, who made the decisions on some of the contracts that went out, and was the best value for dollar done there.

The Auditor General has already determined that there basically isn't like money went somewhere else, but we just want to make sure that the right decisions were made and if the right decisions weren't made as to what was done, we want to correct that. Basically that's what the federal government is looking for in order to give us some more money for more public housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Schell. Your final supplementary, Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For my final question, just out of curiosity, what timeline are we looking at in terms of when will the audit be completed and when will we be informed as to what the results are? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Schell.

Hon. Fred Schell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We already met with the board of directors and with Deloitte and Touche that are going to be doing it. Basically, we're going to have the terms of reference completed by the end of March. Hopefully by August, we will have it completed and be able to let you know in the fall sitting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Schell. Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit West, Ms. Ell.

Question 235 – 3(3): Emergency Exits in Public Housing Units

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

Recently on the news, we have heard of fires occurring. The first one was just prior to Christmas and just this past week, an entire block burned down in Iqaluit. We have heard of other cases in Nunavut where fires occurred.

My question to the minister is whether or not his department is conducting a review or if they share our concerns about the design of buildings in Nunavut. Some of the units currently in use have very old designs without adequate fire exits. I wonder if this issue is being reviewed or even if it is under consideration as we value our residents' lives.

Although we have been fortunate to date without a major tragedy, we still have to think of our future and prepare for eventualities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Schell.

Hon. Fred Schell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for that question. We are definitely looking at all the different designs and the older buildings that are out there. We know for a fact that the 30-something unit apartment building that burned here, it burned in quite a hurry there. Obviously there's some situations and some concerns about the construction of these units. In most cases, unfortunately, the reason for these fires is carelessness, but at the same time, we've got to protect the attendants that are in there and we are looking at it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Schell. Your first supplementary, Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question, then, is when you're looking at the safety of the people in the current units, I am led to understand that some units may not have an exit other than the one entranceway and some windows possibly are the only other opportunity

for a possible exit should their main entrance not be available to exit in the potential that there might have been a fire. Can the minister assure us that they will be looking into these situations? Are they looking at alternative ways and means to possibly prevent a tenant not being able to escape from a fire in the future? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Schell.

Hon. Fred Schell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, in the past here, we already have renovated some of the older buildings where there were windows that weren't big enough for anybody to crawl out. So those have been replaced. Unfortunately, there are limited funds that we have for M&I projects, but that's no excuse for not being able to do it. We are definitely looking at it and I know, under a certain square footage, a second door is not required, but maybe it's something we should be looking at in the future. Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Schell. Your second supplementary, Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This may be my last question. Are fire extinguishers installed in every public unit under the care of the corporation? Additionally, another issue that requires further review down the road is related to either public units or private homes and whether they are aware that they are required to have fire extinguishers in their homes.

Within the context of fire prevention, it should be obvious that you have to inform tenants to always be prepared for

a fire. This includes fire safety booklets. So as part of your information requirements in the future, will you look at that? It may have been already dealt with in the past, but if not, can you ensure that you have a plan to publish fire preparation techniques for tenants? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Schell.

Hon. Fred Schell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All public housing units are supposed to have fire extinguishers in them and they're supposed to be inspected every year. As far as informing the tenants, I'm sure that when they sign up, they're informed that they should have fire extinguishers in there. As far as private homeownership, it's usually the fire department that goes around once a year and makes sure that people are aware that they should have fire extinguishers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Schell. Oral Questions. Member for Tununig, Mr. Enook.

Question 236 – 3(3): Medical Travel Bookings

Mr. Enook (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that when some residents are flown out of their home community for medical appointments in another community, the return date is being booked ahead of time. As my colleague stated, some

patients have problems with their return dates. Mr. Speaker, in some cases, the patient is scheduled to return home before they have even had their appointment. This does not seem to be a very efficient way to organize medical travel. Even before the patient was seen by a doctor, they have a return ticket already booked. This is a problem for the patients.

Can the minister clearly explain the rationale for booking return flights for medical travel clients without ensuring that they will be able to make their appointments before being asked to return home? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Enook. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no explanation for why that would occur. Common sense tells me that you would book the appointment first and then you would book the travel. You would want to see the doctor and then return after the appointment. I know, in the way it has been explained to me, when you see the doctor or specialist, whether you're sent to Yellowknife or Iqaluit or somewhere in the south, you are booked to return as soon after the appointment as possible.

So if you have the name of an individual or people who have experienced that, please pass them on to me and I'll have my officials check into it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Your first supplementary, Mr. Enook.

Mr. Enook (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Indeed, I have no desire to state any names. Additionally, in the future, I will have a chance to provide a more in-depth statement, either by asking related questions during the standing committee or working with your officials when they are available.

However, I would like to direct another question to the minister. If the pre-booking is already causing issues, especially by scheduling a return date, what can your department undertake to ensure this problem is resolved or, alternatively, to ensure that travel arrangements are scheduled in line with their appointments as soon as possible? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Enook. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Mr. Enook for the question. The way I understand it, the health centres would normally book the appointments for the individual to attend and then that information would be communicated to the medical travel coordinators and they would set up the travel. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Your second supplementary, Mr. Enook.

Mr. Enook (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another issue causing problems within the context of pre-booked flights with a set return date is that the patients have to see a specialist as part of their medical travel. They attend to their original appointment, and then after three or four days, they are

rebooked for another appointment. The problem then becomes that their return date is already set and the appointment conflicts with the return date.

Some people assume that since the return date is already set, they have to leave on that date, although the doctor has rebooked them for another appointment. It has already happened on several occasions where people left, even with another appointment booked. Can the minister inform me whether or not this issue will be reviewed immediately? Can you agree that this needs to be reviewed? Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Enook. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Mr. Enook for the question. Again, it's a common-sense thing. If the patient is in the city, whether it's Ottawa or Edmonton, and a doctor wants to see you a couple of days later, it only makes sense to stay for that appointment so you don't have to travel all the way home and then back. I know special appointments are very difficult to arrange. Sometimes you have to wait two to six months.

So I would like to thank Mr. Enook for the comment and question. I'm sure my officials are listening and we will take that into account. It's a way to save money and also a way to save stress on patients and travellers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Oral Questions. Member for Rankin Inlet North, Mr. Curley.

Question 237 – 3(3): GN Procurement Policy

Mr. Curley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question to follow up to the Minister of Finance's statement. He indicated to the members in the House that for public procurement, Inuit firms and entrepreneurs should have a reasonable prospect at winning a contract. No doubt about it, I fully support that. He also indicated that the policies that follow up the obligations of the government must be written in plain language.

How much more plain language, Mr. Speaker, do we need the agreement between federal, territorial, and Inuit? It's written in plain language. Can the minister explain to me what language he's talking about? The minister should be talking about compliance rather than rewriting the policy as there has been a review of the NNI Policy going on for a number of years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister responsible for Finance, Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Mr. Curley for the question. As Mr. Curley will recall, when he was a member of cabinet, we did talk about how we could make the policy clearer, the procurement policies, so it will avoid some of the misunderstandings that occur during the public procurement process.

With all the publicity over RFPs, appeals, and other such matters, we thought... . NTI as well, I was at their AGM in Cambridge Bay, I believe, in

November and it was brought up for discussion as well and it has been in the media. So we just thought that we had to talk about it and try to make it even simpler. I have heard from businesspeople across Nunavut myself in my personal travels about this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Your first supplementary, Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, the minister stated, and I quote again, that “This government will review the NNI Policy in consultation with NTI. We will ensure the policy complies with Article 24.” I want to assure the minister at least that Article 24 is mandatory. It’s an obligation signed by this government. It’s not optional for the civil servants to either ignore it or omit any provision of the NNI Policy when applying contracts and in evaluation of contracts.

So what more is the minister asking us to believe, that the policy itself is the problem, when, in fact, it’s a leadership problem? I believe that the government should insist that Article 24 be implemented. Isn’t this a problem, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister responsible for Finance, Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Mr. Curley for the question. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Curley knows that I’m familiar with the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and quite familiar with Article 24. We do know that that’s law, but we also know that the NNI Policy was initially set up in the First Assembly that worked with

the Government of Nunavut and NTI, and it has been reviewed over the years. I think the last review that was approved by cabinet was in April 2006.

There’s a committee that meets on a regular basis between NTI and the Government of Nunavut. I believe it is the NNI Secretariat that is continuously looking for ways to improve it to make the NNI Policy itself understandable so that when people are picking up tender packages or bid packages, they understand the process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Your second supplementary, Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley: Yes, Mr. Speaker, so there’s no further confusion on the NNI and issues related to Article 24. I stated in my question earlier to another one of your colleagues, the Minister of CGS, that there appears to have been inconsistencies in applying a number of policies and procedures in procurement management.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the minister that applying the NNI Policy and complying with Article 24 is not just a standard procurement issue; it’s an aboriginal title related to that article and it’s sanctioned by section 35 of the *Constitution Act*. So any procurement practices or civil law cases, in my opinion, are irrelevant to that. The only assurance that Nunavutmiut need from the Minister of Finance is that GN will comply with Article 24.

Will you make the commitment now that this government will honour and actually implement Article 24 in all of its practices and that it is not optional for

either deputy ministers or managers of the procurement policy? Will he assure us that he will comply with the provision and not wait until plain language is developed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister of Finance, Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Mr. Curley for the question. Mr. Speaker, I'm not an expert, I'm not a lawyer, I'm none of those things, I'm not a procurement expert, but I do know that there are people out in Nunavut, many people, many businesses, who are having difficulties understanding the NNI Policy. They have asked this government to review it and we have seen, through the public and media and all that, there have been problems. As Mr. Curley will recall, again, from his time on cabinet, we have discussed how we can look at this.

I understand Article 24, but there are people out there who don't quite understand how the NNI Policy works and how it's applied. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Your final supplementary, Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I think it's quite important that the minister clearly indicate to the House that the review will not be a second set of exercises that delays implementing Article 24. There are businesses out there that want this government to honour the provisions that they have signed and it is not expected by the contractors that it be made any more complicated than it appears to have been. So will the minister indicate to the

House exactly how long this rewrite of the policy in plain language will take? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister responsible for the Department of Finance, Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Mr. Curley for the question. Mr. Speaker, I don't know how long it will take, but I assure the members that the NNI Policy is in place and that will continue to apply to the procurement process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Oral Questions. Member for Quttiktuq, Mr. Elliott.

Question 238 – 3(3): High Arctic Transportation Strategy

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation.

In 2008, the minister's department commissioned the High Arctic Transportation Strategy. That strategy was to look into the high cost of travel of people and goods to the High Arctic. There were a number of community consultations and the minister himself made a trip up to all three of my communities to work on coming up with data and hopefully a strategy on how to bring down some of the costs.

Most recently, the minister did a Minister's Statement in the House on October 31 of last year. I was wondering if the minister would be able to give the

House an update as to what's happening with that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister responsible for the Department of Economic Development and Transportation, Minister Taptuna.

Hon. Peter Taptuna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member of Quttiktuq for that excellent question. Mr. Speaker, we have been tackling the high cost of transportation since day one. It has proven very difficult. Based on the findings throughout the data collecting and meeting with the good folks of Resolute Bay, Grise Fiord, and Arctic Bay, the department has determined that the transportation challenges are huge. We have come to the conclusion that we've got to target subsidies for transportation costs of these High Arctic communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Taptuna. Your first supplementary, Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that answer. I know, in the Minister's Statement from October, he had mentioned that they were close to having the study completed and a decision would be made. It has now been four months since that statement was made. I'm just wondering: has cabinet and the Government of Nunavut made a decision as to what the government will be doing to help the good people of Quttiktuq? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister responsible for Economic Development and Transportation, Minister Taptuna.

Hon. Peter Taptuna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I thank the member from Quttiktuq for that question. Mr. Speaker, throughout the last four months, there has been an announcement coming from one of the airlines that they're going to be flying up to one of the High Arctic communities and we're pleased with the announcement. There are possibly other things that we could feed off of that because that will surely bring down some of the transportation and freight costs with another airline flying into these communities.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with the mayors and hamlets to determine how best to tackle some of these issues that we face, which are very difficult to tackle with. I assure the member that once we have solid visions going forward, we will certainly let the member know. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Taptuna. Your second supplementary, Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Next week, the Baffin mayors' meeting will be happening. I'm wondering if the minister could commit to meeting with my mayors at that time to go over and explain what is happening in terms of the strategy and maybe explain to them face to face what the findings are and what's holding up a decision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister responsible for Economic Development and Transportation, Minister Taptuna.

Hon. Peter Taptuna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I thank the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, I look

forward to meeting with the Baffin mayors. I do that annually. It is a very important issue and I want to continue to work with them and dialogue with them on finding solutions to alleviate some of these high costs of transportation. We've got to work together to find ways to do that. I certainly would commit to meeting with the Baffin mayors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Taptuna. Your final supplementary, Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For my final question, if I could get a commitment from the minister in terms of a timeline as to when he thinks we might have a solution to this. Are we talking another four months or are we talking another two years? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister responsible for Economic Development and Transportation, Minister Taptuna.

Hon. Peter Taptuna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated earlier in my response, it has been a very difficult issue to deal with. If I had a crystal ball, I would be naming some times. I'm hoping the sooner the better, of course, but as you know, Mr. Speaker, and the member very well knows, it is a difficult issue to tackle. Although, in the past, we set some deadlines and timeframes to actually move forward on some of these issues that we have been looking at, it has been a very difficult file. I cannot commit to any timelines at this time, but as soon as things are moving forward, I'll certainly let the member know. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Taptuna. Item 7. Oral Questions. Member for Rankin Inlet North, Mr. Curley.

Question 239 – 3(3): Down-payment Assistance for Prospective Homeowners

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask this question related to younger Nunavutmiut, particularly employed people, including couples who are both gainfully employed, seeking housing, and have been selected for units that are ready.

I just learned recently about some individuals in our community, quite a few in fact, who are unable to qualify for mortgages. The units in the private sector which are for sale are priced beyond their range. In addition, land lease, transportation, and material costs are above their approved mortgages, so they are unable to obtain mortgages.

There are some houses that were in the construction phase, with the lots already purchased, but these people cannot complete the construction of their homes. Can the minister responsible for the housing corporation explain further as to whether any form of assistance may be available for people in this situation? I believe that there have to be other forms of subsidy for these people.

Speculation within the market has driven the prices above the ability of people to purchase them. This is largely due to private contractors who are just holding on to their units and awaiting the highest purchase price, speculating that the mining sector will purchase the units when a mine is developed.

Can the minister provide some kind of assistance for these particular applicants? Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Schell.

Hon. Fred Schell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank Mr. Curley for the question. We do have the homeownership program which is available and we also have the down-payment program.

I do understand the high costs, especially for sale of some of these private homes in bigger centres, where there's activity happening, as in Baker Lake, Rankin Inlet, and Iqaluit. Sometimes you're going to pay half a million dollars for a 30-year old home, which an average person obviously can't afford.

We are looking at all kinds of different programs in housing to encourage and get some of these young couples into homes, and we're trying to develop some programs on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Schell. Your first supplementary, Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I will have too many other questions, but I would like to know if the minister can take into consideration the need for a review of the market driving prices artificially high. Residents of Iqaluit are quite well aware of it and it seems to be happening in Rankin Inlet as well. Can this be studied to verify the costs as being valid?

The private contractors who are artificially driving up prices are doing that based on speculation. It seems that some costs are unreasonable, but you have no choice but to accept the price when applying for a mortgage. I would like to ask the minister if he can task a (interpretation ends) study of some kind (interpretation) on the real estate market in Nunavut to determine whether prices are real or not. Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Minister Schell.

Hon. Fred Schell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will commit to looking at that.

Speaker: Thank you very much, Minister Schell. Members will note that the allotted time for Oral Questions has expired. We will move on in the orders of the day. Item 8. Written Questions. Mr. Enook.

Item 8: Written Questions

Written Question 010 – 3(3): Vacant Staff Housing Units

Mr. Enook (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a written question today for the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation concerning the issue of staff housing. The questions are very detailed, so I ask that they be entered into the record as read.

1. Broken down by community and type of unit, how many Government of Nunavut staff housing units were vacant for a period of three or more consecutive months during the 2009-

2010, 2010-11, and 2011-12 (to date) fiscal years?

2. Broken down by type of unit and category of expenditure, what is the average monthly cost of maintaining a vacant staff housing unit?
3. In circumstances where a staff housing unit has remained vacant for a period of 12 or more consecutive months, what is the Nunavut Housing Corporation's policy concerning the temporary allocation of such units for other purposes, including but not limited to the provision of public housing?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Members: Agreed.

Speaker: It has been agreed to and so it shall be. Item 8. Written Questions. Item 9. Returns to Written Questions. Item 10. Replies to Opening Address. Item 11. Replies to Budget Address. Item 12. Petitions. Item 13. Responses to Petitions. Item 14. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. Mr. Ningeongan.

Item 14: Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters

Committee Report 012 – 3(3): Bill 21, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2011, No. 3

Mr. Ningeongan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to report that Bill 21, *Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2011, No. 3*, has been reviewed by the Standing Committee on Legislation and that the bill, as amended, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Ningeongan. Item 15. Tabling of Documents. Mr. Elliott.

Item 15: Tabling of Documents

Tabled Document 147 – 3(3): The Road We Travelled: Our Communities' Voyage to the Future on the ICT Highway

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table today a copy of *The Road We Travelled: Our Communities' Voyage to the Future on the ICT Highway*. This book highlights a number of success stories concerning community-based information and communication technology projects throughout Nunavut, including an initiative that was close to my heart, the Arctic Bay Traditional Name Placing Project. I encourage all members to read and enjoy this inspiring work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Item 15. Tabling of Documents. Mr. Curley.

Tabled Document 148 – 3(3): Maclean's Article: We're Shooting Polar Bears!?!'

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following copy of a *Maclean's* magazine article, dated February 20, 2012, with a

cover photo of a polar bear. The article is entitled “We’re Shooting Polar Bears!?!” I urge my colleagues to peruse the document, especially the Minister of Environment. Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Item 15. Tabling of Documents.

**Tabled Document 149 – 3(3):
Speaker’s List of Outstanding
Statutory Tabling Requirements**

Members, I wish to table today a list of outstanding statutory tabling requirements. This list is current to the end of the February 21, 2012 sitting of the House.

Item 16. Notices of Motions. Item 17. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. Minister of Finance, Minister Peterson.

**Item 17: Notices of Motions for First
Reading of Bills**

**Bill 24 – Appropriation (Operations &
Maintenance) Act, 2012-2013 –
Notice**

**Bill 35 – An Act to Amend the
Tobacco Tax Act – Notice**

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two notices. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, February 24, 2012, that Bill 24, *Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, 2012-2013*, be read for the first time.

Mr. Speaker, I also give notice that on Friday, February 24, 2012, that Bill 35, *An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act*,

be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. Item 18. Motions. Item 19. First Reading of Bills. Minister Peterson.

Item 19: First Reading of Bills

Hon. Keith Peterson: Mr. Speaker, I request consent of this Assembly to waive the two-day notice requirement to allow for the first reading of Bill 24, *Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, 2012-2013*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. The minister is seeking consent to waive the two-day waiting rule so that Bill 24 can be read today for the first time. Do members agree?

Some Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Members agreed. Please proceed, Minister Peterson.

**Bill 24 –Appropriation (Operations &
Maintenance) Act, 2012-2013 –
First Reading**

Hon. Keith Peterson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Rankin Inlet South and Whale Cove, that Bill 24, *Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, 2012-2013*, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. The motion is in order. All those in favour. Any opposed? None. The motion is carried.

Item 19. First Reading of Bills. Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Mr. Speaker, I request consent of this Assembly to waive the two-day notice requirement to allow for the first reading of Bill 35, *An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. The minister is seeking consent to waive the two-day waiting rule so that Bill 35 can be read for the first time today. Do members agree?

Some Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Please proceed, Minister Peterson.

Bill 35 – An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act – First Reading

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Rankin Inlet South and Whale Cove, that Bill 35, *An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act*, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. The motion is in order. All those in favour. Any opposed? None. The motion is carried.

Item 20. Second Reading of Bills. Minister Peterson.

Item 20: Second Reading of Bills

Bill 24 – Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, 2012-2013 – Second Reading

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Rankin Inlet South and Whale Cove, that Bill 24, *Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, 2012-2013*, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill authorizes the Government of Nunavut to make operations and maintenance expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Question has been called. All those in favour. Any opposed? The motion is carried and Bill 24 is referred to the Committee of the Whole.

Item 20. Second Reading of Bills. Minister Peterson.

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request consent of this Assembly to waive the one-day notice requirement to allow for the second reading of Bill 35, *An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. The minister is seeking consent to waive the one-day waiting rule so that Bill 35 can be read for a second time. Do members agree?

Some Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Members agreed. Please proceed, Minister Peterson.

Bill 35 – An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act – Second Reading

Hon. Keith Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Rankin Inlet South and Whale Cove, that Bill 35, *An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act*, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will increase the tax rate per cigarette and per gram of cigarette and other tobacco. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister Peterson. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Question has been called. All those in favour. Any opposed? The motion is carried and Bill 35 is referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation.

Item 21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Bill 24 with Mr. Ningeongan in the Chair.

Before we proceed to the Committee of the Whole, we will take a 20-minute break.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House recessed at 15:36 and Committee resumed at 16:02*

Item 21: Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

Chairman (Mr. Tapardjuk) (interpretation): Thank you very much once again for coming back. I would like to call the committee meeting to order.

In Committee of the Whole, we have the following item to deal with: Bill 24.

What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Aupaluktuq.

Mr. Aupaluktuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We would like to commence the review of Bill 24 and the Department of Education. Mr. Chairman, once the Department of Education is completed and if time permits, we would like to proceed with the review of the Department of Health and Social Services. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Aupaluktuq. Do we agree that we deal with the Department of Education's main estimates?

Some Members: Agreed.

Bill 24 – Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, 2012-2013 – Education – Consideration in Committee

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Does the Minister of Education, Madam Aariak, like to make her opening remarks? Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to meet with the committee to discuss the 2012-13 main estimates and business plan for the Department of Education.

Mr. Chairman, I believe education is the foundation for a healthy, strong, and flourishing Nunavut. This government has made education, self-reliance, and improved access to learning a *Tamapta* priority. Therefore, it is crucial we offer

Nunavummiut the tools they need to become capable and engaged in the opportunities and future prospects of our territory and the rest of Canada.

The Department of Education, guided by *Qanuqtuurnarniq*, the value of innovation and resourcefulness, aims to provide quality lifelong learning opportunities to help improve learning outcomes for all the citizens of Nunavut. It begins with early childhood education, leading to bilingual and innovative kindergarten through grade 12 programming, to quality and responsive adult learning and career development opportunities targeted to meet the growing workforce demand, to the provision of social assistance so that no one is left behind. We are determined to build a territory of educated and empowered people with the skills to succeed.

Mr. Chairman, we are working hard to make improvements to our programs and services with the goal of enhancing the lives of Nunavummiut.

Before I present specific details about our proposed business plan, I would like to take this opportunity to outline the changes to the layout of our business plan and main estimates. You may recall changes last year involved restructuring the lines of business in the business plan so that they more closely reflect the organization of the department and the main estimates. This year, we have made an additional minor change to the business plan and main estimates. In order to group the two K-12 lines of business together and group the three adult learning lines of business together, we have re-ordered the lines of business. The lines of business are now, in order:

advisory and administrative services; K-12 school operations; curriculum and school services; career and early childhood services; adult learning and post-secondary services; and income support headquarters.

Mr. Chairman, in order to put our plans into action, we have put forward a budget of close to \$233 million for the 2012-13 fiscal year. This is an \$8.1 million increase over last year's budget.

The most significant change to the numbers that appear throughout the department's budget is an accounting change. In the past, the department has been directed to provide new or enhanced programs and services without funding to cover the cost of the programs and services. Funding to provide these programs and services has been found from vacant positions within the department. The way this has been allocated within the department has changed, resulting in a decrease in salary elements of many business plan program lines. This changes the numbers you see in the current year from past years but is not a change in funding, simply a more accurate representation of overall expected salary expenses.

The biggest individual change to this year's budget is an increase of \$7.5 million for K-12 schools due to the collective agreement signed with the Nunavut Teachers Association. In addition, the budget for the Teacher Professional Improvement Fund has been increased by \$350,000.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that all children can learn given the appropriate support. The quality of education achieved by the students at each grade

level is of the utmost importance to the department and we are continually working to ensure that all students are successful in their studies. We are guided by the concepts of *Ilippallianguinnarniq*, continuous learning; *Pivallianguinnarniq*, continuous progress; and *Sivuniksamut Ilinniarniq*, learning for the future in our curriculum development and teaching methods.

The department is developing a comprehensive assessment strategy that will give teachers better tools for assessing what students have learned. All teaching units developed by the department outline the skills and knowledge students are expected to learn. The units also provide teacher assessment, self assessment, and peer assessment activities to determine achievement of those skills and knowledge.

Piliriqatigiinniq, working together for a common cause, will help schools, parents, district education authorities, and the department provide the support students need to attend school regularly, meet their goals, and select the appropriate courses for graduation.

Inclusive education is at the very heart of the Nunavut education system. It is our government's intent that all students will receive educational opportunities focused on their individual strengths and needs. Mr. Chairman, no two students are the same. We are working to provide an education system that supports individual learning patterns so that all students experience success. Three new student support assistant positions have been added to help us accept and support all children in the school system, regardless of their abilities or challenges.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Chairman, the Department of Education realizes that early childhood education programs are critical to instilling a lifelong love of learning. Fostering the abilities and talents of our youngest citizens is an investment in the educational success of Nunavut's future. Funding of \$1.6 million is being provided annually to the district education authorities for early childhood programming that focuses on increased Inuit language and culture activities, a requirement of our *Education Act*. Working together, we will give our youngest learners the support they need by providing early childhood education programs that give our youngest learners a strong foundation based on Inuit language, culture, values, and beliefs.

I am pleased to point out the changes in the adult learning budget that have allowed us to create a career development services division, following a key recommendation from the Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy. This division will give us the structure needed to provide direction for adult learning services so that we can better meet the *Tamapta* priority of improving education and training outcomes. Existing positions in the department were redirected to focus on career development services, which include trades and apprenticeship, the administration of federal training money, GED, and Adult Learning Strategy implementation.

You will see a new program line under adult education. This line is for the mature graduation program, which is in the early development stages at this time. This program is an adult learning strategy and a specific *Tamapta* priority.

It will combine literacy, adult basic education, GED, and adult high school completion and upgrading into one structure.

\$600,000 has been temporarily moved from the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students budget to career development headquarters for the development of a new FANS database. The complex eligibility criteria of the different streams of FANS funding requires an information technology system that works effectively to provide a seamless flow from processing, recording, reporting, and collecting. The present system was put in place in 2000 and is based on outdated software that can no longer be supported adequately. The development of a new system is expected to take about two years.

Mr. Chairman, in *Tamapta*, it states that “We Should All Have What We Need.” Guided by *Pijitsirniq*, the concept of serving, not as an inferior but as a leader, our government is working with individuals, families, and communities to help make sure the basic needs of all Nunavummiut are being met. The Income Support Program plays an important role in helping to make sure that all Nunavummiut have access to a minimum standard of living.

Mr. Chairman, we have heard members’ concerns about it being too easy to access and remain on the Income Support Program. The Income Support Program is a program of last resort and the Department of Education works closely with program recipients, encouraging them to pursue employment, education, training, or other opportunities that will help them move toward self-sufficiency and exit

the program. Making sure that clients fully understand what level of support the Income Support Program provides will help prevent abuse of the program and encourage clients to work toward becoming self-reliant.

Poverty reduction is a key *Tamapta* priority. The Department of Education is an active member of the Poverty Reduction Working Group led by the Department of Economic Development and Transportation. The task ahead is challenging but very necessary to the health and well-being of our territory. The department is committed to helping the government reach this *Tamapta* priority.

The Department of Education looks forward to continuing our work in the months and years ahead. The framework set out in *Tamapta* is a solid guide in helping us provide exciting and innovative programs for the success and growth of Nunavummiut. I am eager to work with the committee and my colleagues to build capacity, enhance training and education opportunities, expand the role of lifelong learning in Nunavut, and help this government reduce poverty in our capable and exceptional territory.

(interpretation) I am happy to respond to questions from the committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak, for your opening remarks and outlining the budget for your department. Do you have witnesses that you would like to bring to the table? Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Does the committee agree to bring in the witnesses?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses in.

Thank you, Minister of Education, Minister Aariak. For the record, please introduce your witnesses. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm very pleased to be at the witness table. On my left is Kathy Okpik and on my right is Heather Fanjoy, Controller of School Operations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Welcome, Deputy Minister Okpik and Heather Fanjoy. Does the Co-chair of the Standing Committee on Social Wellness have comments? Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Co-chair of the Standing Committee on Social Wellness, I am pleased to make opening comments as we begin deliberations on the proposed 2012-13 budget of the Department of Education.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Education's proposed 2012-13 operations and maintenance budget is \$232.9 million, which is an increase of just over \$8 million from its 2011-12 operations and maintenance budget.

The standing committee notes that the biggest increase in funding is for compensation and benefits, which takes into account the new collective agreement with the Nunavut Teachers Association as well as additional positions as required by the *Education Act*, such as school community counsellors, language and cultural instructors, and elders as instructors in the classroom. Committee members encourage the minister to ensure that appropriately qualified individuals are filling these positions, especially in the area of language instruction.

Committee members continue to encourage the minister to work with her colleague, the Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College, to encourage more Nunavut teachers to become qualified to work at all levels of the school system.

Mr. Chairman, as noted when reviewing the Department of Education's proposed operations and maintenance budget for 2011-12, the expectations placed on community-based district education authorities are leading to some delays in finalizing and implementing the required policies and regulations. DEAs were given increased powers and decision-making authorities under Nunavut's new *Education Act*, and members have raised a number of concerns regarding the ability of DEAs to exercise their statutory powers. DEAs need ongoing support, resources, and training to fulfill their obligations. The standing committee urges the minister to provide the necessary support and resources.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Education's K-12 School Operations Division and the various programs that

support the delivery of kindergarten to grade 12 schooling in Nunavut are critical to ensuring that our young residents are able to participate in Nunavut's future economy. The standing committee recognizes that the department is introducing a new set of course options which will enable students to direct their studies towards future career options. Members encourage the minister in her efforts to ensure that the appropriate levels of career guidance counselling are available to students to ensure that they make the necessary choices.

Mr. Chairman, members continue to have concerns regarding the standards of educational achievement earned by Nunavut high school graduates compared to graduates from other jurisdictions across Canada. Members look forward to reviewing the results of the assessments of students' language and math skills which will provide important feedback on whether the necessary skills and competencies are being achieved by students.

The standing committee has noted that section 126 of the new *Education Act* requires that an annual report on the "education system in Nunavut" be produced and tabled in this House and members look forward to reviewing this report as soon as it is tabled.

The standing committee recognizes that the department is developing a student information system which will include data from student records as well as enrolment and attendance data. A standardized tracking system across all of Nunavut's schools will allow for improved trend evaluations in such areas

as attendance, truancy, and achievement levels.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Education administers a number of programs and resources related to adult learning. Committee members urge the Minister of Education to continue in her efforts to improve the delivery of the financial aid for Nunavut students, or FANS, program. Members recognize that students also bear responsibilities for ensuring that the appropriate documentation is provided and forms filled out in a timely manner. However, issues in this area could be addressed with improved means of communication.

Mr. Chairman, the standing committee supports the department's efforts to address community-level needs in the area of early childhood education, including providing support to DEAs which have responsibilities in this area under the *Education Act*.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Education has the responsibility for delivering income support programs, which are directed towards assisting families and adult individuals to meet their basic needs. The Social Assistance Program is intended as a program of last resort, and members were pleased to note that demands in this area appear to be stable. The standing committee notes with approval that the department's new electronic case management system has successfully been implemented in at least one community and looks forward to the rollout across all of Nunavut's communities. Committee members support the minister and her officials in their efforts to introduce initiatives aimed at poverty reduction, such as increasing earning allowances and

introducing additional work-based incentives for income support clients. Members recognize that although there may be resulting increase in monetary cost as a result of these initiatives, there will be overall benefits in reducing levels of dependence and building self-reliance.

Mr. Chairman, on a final note, the standing committee is aware that the Executive Council is considering a possible reorganization of service delivery across government departments. Members caution the government to ensure that frontline community-based workers are informed as soon as possible of any such changes and are provided with timely and adequate support to ensure that service delivery can continue without any unnecessary interruptions.

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

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Before we proceed, I would like to remind members of the following: according to Rule 77(1), you have 10 minutes to speak, and according to Rule 77(2), subject to the discretion of the Chair, a member may speak more than once to a matter under discussion but not until every member wishing to speak has spoken.

I suggest to members that wherever possible you ask your detailed questions during the page-by-page review of the departmental estimates. Do members have any general comments? Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hope the minister is welcome as this is an important department and is a source of pride for Nunavutmiut. I want to welcome the deputy minister and the other officials.

Firstly, I want to make this comment, Mr. Chairman, which is also for the benefit of the people tuning into the discussions, that we urge our children to attend and graduate from high school as education has a bearing on one's ability to land a job. This can be difficult in light of our many youth who have not completed high school and have dropped out. They face a bleak future without education and many employers don't hire dropouts.

In some of our communities, we have unemployable people who we have to look after, even though this department, along with Nunavut Arctic College, will undoubtedly try to provide more assistance. I believe this issue is one that we all share ownership of. We have to instil hope and better expectations to our people who have dropped out so they can work to be employable.

The situation is depressing for some people since they cannot get housing nor can they raise a family if they are not gainfully employed. These people are still in a perilous situation when we look at them from a traditional Inuit perspective. Due to these reasons, we have to focus on working more closely to resolve these issues. This is especially the case when I read the mission statement. I had an idea that I would like to share since we can develop more partnership with the RIAs, Inuit groups, and not just have Arctic College and others beyond look after this. We have to

work collaboratively to meet our challenges.

The reason why I comment on this matter is that people who haven't completed high school face challenges and many of us are in the same boat. People can be depressed and hopeless, which leads to more problems. When one doesn't have hope for the future, depression sets in. When people are in that situation with no ability to escape their depression, many turn to alcohol, drugs, and other addictive things. We know this, yet we wonder why many of our youth contemplate or commit suicide. We have to bear down and cooperate to deal with this issue, and this matter is one I wanted to comment on, as you, being the minister, also have to provide leadership on this issue and not just slough it off to another department. You have to also provide ideas on possible solutions.

The reason why I am commenting on this, to return to my earlier statement, is that we have expectations of our children completing their schooling, which is why many of us urge our children to attend school every day. With art teachers, principals, and LEA positions providing assistance, I believe they are making progress as more students are attending classes.

However, I believe we have to invite the parents to become more involved. Parents, being the heads of their family, have to bear down, especially when their children don't want to attend school. In too many cases, parents will allow a child to not attend school when they do not want to attend. We have to face this parental attitude and remind them that a future without education is too bleak and

we, the parents, will not be around forever.

While we are in the general comments, I wanted to state that I was quite pleased with one of the comments read by the minister about a seamless learning environment, basically an endless learning opportunity available to learners of all ages. I like this statement. I wanted to provide an example that showcases this.

Just recently, during a trip home in Rankin Inlet, I went to a class that was being given to young women, some who were just teenagers and others who were adults with children. They were learning all about sealskins, from cleaning to drying and preparing a skin. I was impressed. There were quite a number of skins, some with blubber and others in various stages of cleansing. They all had different activities, such as working the skin into different states, such as whitening the skin or making waterproof kamiik. I was impressed.

There was one student who seemed to be the smallest of the bunch that the instructor pointed to and stated that since she started that class, her husband wanted to start hunting seals so that he could provide her with material. (interpretations ends) That impressed me and touched my heart. (interpretation) When he noted that his wife wanted to take the class, and I believe Monica knows this firsthand, this woman's husband was inspired to go hunting to provide skins for his wife so that she can succeed.

I am leading up to my point, which is that we have to focus more on the young men and provide more programs. We

have many training programs available for women, such as sewing programs funded by various organizations, but we also have to think about the young men or even people who have matured but don't have a lot of knowledge about the land and weather. We have to return to providing more programs to them, although I'm unsure as to which department would provide that. However, I wanted to direct this suggestion to the department.

When I was in Rankin Inlet just a few days ago, I was informed that Arctic College was going to start a two-year program for nursing students. I believe it is called LPN, or licensed practical nurse. That is a very popular program. Even though I was only there for a very short visit, I was consistently told that they want that program to be approved. There are people who want to apply to this new program when it is approved, which is good. I like that sort of program.

With respect to our men, I have to make this comment. For some men, it is harder to discuss these issues as they are not used to vocalizing their feelings, even when you ask them questions. Some people are just not very sociable, especially younger men, when asked about their feelings or thoughts. (interpretation ends) We need more programs for young people, even traditionally. (interpretation) Not everyone is going to go to Clyde River. However, we should provide something in our communities.

Mr. Chairman, I am very proud of this department because it's a very important department and I just wanted to focus on a few matters pertaining to the opening

remarks as well as on their mission statement. I encourage the minister to not worry but to work in partnership with the RIAs through consultation and cooperation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. The next name on my list is Mr. Ningeongan.

Mr. Ningeongan (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to refer to this matter on page 6 of your opening comments, Madam Minister. I just want clarification on the second paragraph, (interpretation ends) "it will combine literacy, adult basic education, GED, and adult high school completion." (interpretation) If I understand it completely, this seems to be moving \$600,000 temporarily from the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students budget to fund a new FANS database. I would like the minister to clarify this point.

In my opinion, Mr. Chairman, the fact of FANS funding being held up has led some students who are attending classes to be on the verge of giving up and they usually have to turn to their parents to borrow funds until they get their funding. I wonder if this hasn't impacted people's decisions to attend college and whether this has been debated. I would like to get a bit more clarification about this issue. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Ningeongan. Minister Aariak, I believe there was a question, so if you would like to respond.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The member has raised a very good question. The FANS program, the Financial Assistance

for Nunavut Students, budget will not be impacted, especially since we consider adult education to be quite important and these students require assistance. The budget will not be touched and the funding will not be reduced. What we are hoping to improve is the FANS database, which we want to fund so as to make it easier to process applications. We believe that this will improve access to our students and our ability to have data available at a moment's notice.

I certainly hope I answered the member's question. He can raise another question if I didn't provide an adequate response. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Did you get the response you were seeking? Mr. Ningeongan.

Mr. Ningeongan (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Madam Minister. I just wanted to reiterate that I want this taken into consideration. I'm sure she noted my comments on the matter. As I stated earlier, in past years, some parents had to send money to their children attending school when their funding was delayed. I believe that this has to be taken into consideration as well.

When the FANS funding is not received by the students for a long period, it creates difficulties for the students as well as the parents since they then have to send money to allow their child to bridge the gap before they receive their funding. I understand that this problem will be alleviated with the new FANS database, if it delivers on the promises we have heard.

It is unfortunate that parents, due to the tardiness of the funding support, have had to send their own money to their children, which is not reimbursed, and this has happened throughout Nunavut, according to what we have heard. I am just restating this matter and it is not a question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Ningeongan. Although there is no question, I'll give you the opportunity to respond. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to that statement, it is true that we have experienced problems in the past with the late payments into students' accounts, but it was a lot more visible. The Department of Education has been working hard to make improvements in the FANS funding system, especially in the past year, and we haven't heard of too many other complaints about funding delays since then. I just wanted to state that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Thank you, Mr. Ningeongan. Mr. Enook.

Mr. Enook (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to welcome the Premier and her officials. Seeing as how we are all Inuit, I will make my comments in Inuktitut.

On page 4, within the last paragraph of your opening comments, it states that any two students are not the same. Although I take pride in that statement, it also states further that based on individual learning patterns, students will be taught so as to allow them to succeed. With that statement, it includes

the three new student support assistant positions that your department wants to add to provide this assistance.

Mr. Chairman, what I want to raise is that we hear of situations where, for example, it's more important for a 10-year-old student to move when the family moves, even if the student was behind in their studies at their grade level, as long as they can take classes with their age group in the classroom. Is this an actual policy that is followed or is it a slightly different set-up?

Mr. Chairman, if this question is off course, I will understand if you don't allow it. If you can bear with me, I would like to ask that question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Enook. I believe that you have a question regarding the minister's opening comments. Minister Aariak, if you would like to respond.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed quite important to ensure that all students are all progressing in their studies and to learn their courses required to pass their grade level. However, every student has different skill levels and learning curves. The students who require more assistance are provided with additional help, either on a one-to-one basis or after they have tests done, to determine which areas require strengthening if they are behind. This is to allow the student to catch up with their classmates. This is accomplished through testing by staff members within the school and this is primarily to ensure that students are not

being left behind. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Enook.

Mr. Enook (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the Premier for her response. Perhaps if I rephrased my question to make it clearer and I apologize if it didn't come across in my statement.

When students are moved up to the higher grades, is this simply to ensure that the students are in their age group? As an example, if the student is 11 years old, does this mean that even though they may not pass their coursework, they will follow? Does this mean that no one can be left behind? Is there a policy or legal requirement that governs this situation?

As an example, when I first went to school, I was in kindergarten for two years and since I didn't learn all of the required material in the first year, they left me in kindergarten for another year. My question is: are any students left behind if they didn't pass their grade level nowadays? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Enook. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Very infrequently, but it does still happen with some students. However, even if they are held back, it is only if the classmates are not too much older or younger, and that is the only rule. The staff within the school make that determination as there is a committee that reviews these cases,

especially where a student requires tutorials or extra work. They do this work to ensure that students requiring assistance are given that help. Whenever students are found to be behind, they are given assistance.

So, yes, it does occasionally happen where a student has to retake a grade if that is what is deemed best for the student. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Enook.

Mr. Enook (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister again. What about the other end of the spectrum? Are there also opportunities for a more advanced student who is far ahead in their studies to be moved ahead to a higher grade?

An example was when I was a primary student, from September to December of the year, I was in grade 3, but I was then moved to grade 4 from January to March, and then from March onwards, they put me in grade 5. That was my personal experience. I must have been quite advanced.

>> *Laughter*

Does the system still allow students to be advanced to a higher grade if the situation calls for it? Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Indeed, in educating our students, we have to ensure that their schooling reflects their ability to succeed. It is very important

that if a student is quite advanced and a quick study, their teacher develops a student plan. In cases where the student is a quick study and grasps concepts ahead of their classmates, their teacher will develop a specialized plan.

We have some gifted students who have had to be advanced to a higher grade if it called for that, but again, it is only if there is space available in the higher grade. This also requires further testing to ensure that the student is capable of meeting the more advanced classes so as not to be left behind. There are teachers in the schools who develop learning plans and this is tied into the committee that looks after student needs, advanced or requiring more assistance.

I hope that my response is understandable. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. I have no more names on my list. We can now move on to the page-by-page review. Please indicate to me when you have questions. We will start on page G-4. Directorate. Education. Are there any questions? (interpretation ends) Operations and Maintenance. (interpretation) G-4. \$780,000. Do you agree? I didn't hear anything. (interpretation ends) Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Now I hear you. Are there any questions on Policy and Planning? (interpretation ends) Branch Summary. (interpretation) G-5. Operations and Maintenance for 2012-13. \$967,000. Are there any questions? Do you agree?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Corporate Services. Education. Branch Summary. G-6. Are there any questions? Operations and Maintenance. \$2,233,000. Do you agree?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Do we have quorum? Yes, we do have quorum. K-12 School Operations. Mr. Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure if my question is appropriate at this time, so if the Chairman or the minister feels that my question is out of order, I do apologize.

Mr. Chairman, during the sitting of the House today, I asked the minister a question regarding the English departmental exam to which the minister said that she would get back to me with the information that I requested. Given the fact that the minister is now sitting before us with her officials in Committee of the Whole, is the minister or her officials in a position to explain why the English department exam was not administered in Sanikiluaq in January when it was supposed to? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Rumbolt. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the question. I will try to ensure my response is clear and comprehensible. I stated earlier that I would provide a response later on today, so I hope to have that information later on that the

member wanted information on. I will speak in English.

(interpretation ends) The initial request for exams to Alberta was rejected due to no school code assigned to the high school due to the new school. The department updated the list with the new school and its code prior to when the exams were to be written. It was our understanding that the new code was received, but looking at the reality, unfortunately, the exams did not arrive on time. Our registrar for student records was not notified until two days after the date the exams were to be written by the students. The school did not have the exams in their possession. The students will be able to write the grade 12 departmental exams in June.

The department will also review the school lists and codes to ensure that they are accurate in the future. The department will send out a reminder to schools asking that they confirm receipts of exams of at least one week prior to the date of the exam. This will allow the department to work with Alberta education in ensuring that the exam is available when required.

(interpretation) If my colleague has another question, I am available to respond, but I hope my response is adequate for the time being, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Rumbolt, perhaps your school was brand new at the time. Do you have additional questions? Mr. Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for her

response. It explains it a lot better. In her explanation, she said that the students won't be able to take the departmental exam until June. What is the reasoning they have to wait until June to take this exam? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Rumbolt. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak: The exams are set at a certain date and the next set date will be in June. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. I have no more names on my list. Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the questions I wanted to ask was in regard to the development of the comprehensive assessment strategy for the students. In the opening comments, the Premier talks about the teacher assessment, self assessment, and peer assessment, which, to me, I think is a good idea because you would have documentation having the students reflect as well on their progress. Will these types of assessments be put and kept in the students' permanent record as it's tracked all the way through their school career? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the responsibility for the person to make sure that they are put into the permanent records, I don't know. I'm just going from experience in working in the school. You get busy at the end of the year and you might not get certain documents in the file for the students, especially for new teachers who come in. We have an average rotation of teachers coming in and out.

To be able to give a good assessment for an incoming teacher, I know a lot of times when the teachers come in and sit down in August or September to start evaluating their students to see what levels they're at, sometimes there's a lot of detailed information that should be there that isn't there. I'm just curious: to make the process work properly, who is actually ultimately responsible for making sure that those documents are kept track of? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The member asked who was responsible for storing student records. The teachers receive an orientation session prior to the school year on the roles, responsibilities, and duties they are required to undertake. If I were to say it in English, they are provided orientation sessions. This is also part of the teachers' orientation about the requirements of the school, such as recordkeeping.

(interpretation ends) So the orientation will be provided to the teachers and then it is the teacher's responsibility that the records are properly placed and stored.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to viewing those permanent records, if a student or a parent or a guardian wants to view them, do they have access to viewing these records? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Yes, if the parents wish to, they can access the permanent records of their children. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to attendance in the schools, I know Mr. Geikie was quoted in a recent newspaper article, I think it was on February 13, about 72 percent attendance across our schools in the territory. He had mentioned working with our schools, communities, and DEAs to encourage students to attend specific... I think it's great to continue to encourage people and it's great that we're not expecting just the schools or teachers or the principals to be allowing the students to come in and putting emphasis on parents as well to encourage their children to go to school.

I'm wondering: what specific details can you give us? I know it's a reflection of the *Education Act* to try and help people to go to school, but what specific details are you referring to when you're trying

to get people into the school or what specific details are you doing to try and get the students there? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The department is working with district education authorities and the school principals in developing stay-in-school initiatives. There are many changes underway in supporting attendance in schools and these include the development of a program called "It's not okay to be away," which shares effective practices from Nunavut schools.

Another one is a pilot project in Baker Lake to determine what works to help students stay in school and work on new programs and approaches to school programming in grades 6 to 9, as well as the development of a project to identify ways to help male students find school more interesting and engaging.

Another area that we are working with is the ITK Education Accord. There is a heavy emphasis in that accord, which deals with parental engagement.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Within the *Education Act*, if students are not attending, are there regulations as to what...? Obviously, if students are not attending, you're not going to expel them or not have them come to school because they're not coming to school

already, but are there any other recourses that the *Education Act* has? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll have my deputy minister respond to that question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Ms. Okpik, please go ahead.

Ms. Okpik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Within the new legislation, the fine was removed for the lack of attendance as it was felt that the overall goal should not be punishment oriented. However, the purpose of this legislation is to work in partnership with the parents and that is part of our work.

The local DEAs have received an additional \$1.6 million from our department to work on developing local policies pertaining to attendance and the course of action that will govern their implementation of this policy. There is room to create a committee specifically for this initiative.

Additionally, as our Premier alluded to, we are working with other jurisdictions, such as Nunatsiavut, Northwest Territories, and Nunavik, to look at the issue of attendance and how we can create more interest amongst the students, including how to encourage our students to attend schools. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Okpik. Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the answer. Obviously, we do want to get more of our students going to school and taking more interest in learning.

One of the things that the minister had said in her opening comments was about inclusive schooling. I wanted to ask some more detailed questions about what is meant by inclusive schooling. Starting with the most obvious, are of our schools wheelchair accessible and accessible for people with physical disabilities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Every school has had its operations reviewed specifically to check on their needs or requirements. I can state unequivocally at this time that all schools have the necessary infrastructure to accommodate students who have difficulty walking or who require a wheelchair. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to learning disabilities, whether they are hearing impairments or specific learning disabilities or possibly FASD, I'm wondering: how often are our children assessed or what type of an assessment actually happens? I would think that there would be some emphasis on early testing to be able to catch it early, to be able to come up with an individual education program for an individual. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When it becomes noticeable that assistance is required, particularly with that condition, the Department of Health becomes involved. Furthermore, when children are deemed ready for kindergarten, they undergo a preschool assessment prior to the school year that determines their health and whether their hearing is normal or whether they need corrective lenses. These types of assessments occur prior to the school year starting and the children who have been found to have this condition are given the proper assistance and the school works with the health officials to determine the needs of the student. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Specifically in regard to FASD and the assessment of that, lately, I have been doing a little bit of reading on that. A number of people who are diagnosed with this actually have a hard time and struggle within school and do drop out, then end up, in later years, within the justice system, and then tracked throughout their life and they're held behind right from the beginning.

I'm just wondering: could you just clarify? I know I have asked this before in the past to the Minister of Justice and whatnot. Does the Department of Education cover that type of testing or is there another department that handles that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to that issue, the schools have an in-house committee comprised of teachers who look at the needs of the students through assessing their shortcomings. The committee directs the type of work required and the schools utilize that when a student is found to have needs with the assistance of the Department of Health. The committee and the health officials work together whenever a student is found to need further assistance. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know, over the years of doing different presentations like this and being on the committees, there have been a lot of emphasis on creating a positive environment within the schools and embracing education. Obviously, now with the suicide prevention strategy completed and then the implementation plan being done, I'm sure there are a lot of opportunities within the schools where embracing life is being encouraged.

I was wondering if we could get a bit of an update. I know the deputy minister is part of the Quality of Life Committee. I think that's what it's called. In terms of what the Department of Education is doing to follow through on some of the recommendations that were in the implementation plan, I know all departments were sort of working together to help with that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Elliott. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we also consider this a very important aspect of the schools. The teachers are encouraged to discuss the program, which is called the ASIST program in English. This program is applied in the schools and it is recommended since it has benefits.

Within the schools, another required curriculum is called Aulajaaqtut. This is a required course designed specifically for life skills and it was designed as a quality of life program. These two programs are provided much needed assistance. I am quite pleased and thankful that my deputy minister is involved in the committee that overlooks this quality of life programming. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have heard recently about the Inuksuk High School here in Iqaluit being closed due to the frozen utilidor pipes. We also heard about a spill at a school up in Pangnirtung. This resulted in the schools having to be closed for a lengthy period of time. Perhaps it is too early to request more details, but I imagine these two events have taught the operational staff about the events that can cause their schools to close.

Can the minister relate what these experiences taught the school officials after they had to close their schools due to these issues? What changes have been implemented, particularly those related to closures and the need to communicate

that with their students, parents, and the day-to-day updates on what the status of their school is, especially for the higher grades up to grade 12? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank my colleague for raising that issue. Just recently, the schools underwent these closures and the education officials worked really hard to review the factors that forced these closures. With respect to these experiences teaching the officials to prepare for any eventuality, it is too early as they haven't completed their review, but we are starting to get more information.

At this time, I would like my deputy minister, Kathy, to provide more details related to the member's question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Deputy Minister Okpik.

Ms. Okpik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. School operations, particularly the management of schools, involve very different challenges, especially when the schools are vastly different in age and design. To try to articulate this, as an example, the Department of Education deals with curriculum issues. Any maintenance or repair work within the school or related infrastructure is the responsibility of the Department of Community and Government Services. Additionally, when we talk about how the school is to be used, that is the responsibility of the local DEA.

These events have really taught us exactly who has to be involved when dealing with these issues and which body will be responsible for communicating these issues to the parents and the community. To use this example, in Pangnirtung, the Department of Education, CG&S, as well as the health officials cooperated to deal with that challenge. Officials from these three departments travelled to Pangnirtung to speak with the teachers and the community representatives to resolve any concerns and to conduct an investigation as to what exactly occurred in their school. Once we had appraised the situation and determined what required repairs were needed, our worker had to travel back twice to the community to consult with the teachers and the community, as well as the operational staff. Updates were provided on the repairs being done, as well as whether or not problems were resolved. So this event taught us quite a bit.

Additionally, the need for a proper spokesperson to represent all the different departments and communities became apparent. Generally, anything related to the schools in the community are communicated to the public by the DEA chairs as they are the elected officials responsible for the local schools. We will continue to work with all DEAs in particular where communications require a spokesperson and whether our department needs to provide more assistance.

When dealing with repairs or maintenance issues, different problems arise throughout the various schools. As was proven by events in Pangnirtung and Apex, there were problems with the fuel causing things to escalate. Here in

Iqaluit, the utilidor pipes froze, which was an entirely different challenge from the other examples I just gave.

What I can state is that, with respect to the scheduling concerns expressed here in Iqaluit, particularly parental concerns about their children missing school work and days that could impact their course requirements, these issues are clearly identified to the local DEAs and they generally schedule the school year.

With respect to unexpected problems or closures, we generally set aside a contingency of 20 to 25 days for these events. This is to ensure that the number of school days is not severely impacted and that it does not affect students' course work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Deputy Minister Okpik. Did you want to continue? Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Another item under the grants and contributions figures from K-12 School Operations is the funding for DEAs and the French school commission as well, I believe. The funding under this item is going to be decreased in 2012-13. From my perspective, the DEAs provide valuable assistance related to school operations, curriculum decisions, or in reviewing new policies or legislation. I wonder why the funding for the DEAs will be decreased. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The communities generally are responsible

for these issues, specifically the district education authority. The amounts for them don't change with respect to their operations. Additionally, the teachers are part of the NEU collective agreement and there is a negotiation team with the union. The funds are used for these discussions and include casual staffing funding, which have been decreased from these figures. It also impacts the busing contract. The funds for the casual staffing hires have been returned to the district education authorities.

Hopefully my answer is understandable and I will stop there for the time being. If my colleague would like to get more clarification, she can ask more detailed questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Do you have any further questions? Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The DEA coalition receives funding under the grants and contributions line of the K-12 School Operations Branch budget. Can you describe your working relationship with the coalition? How has it been involved in initiatives related to attendance, school completion, and dropout rates? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I want to assert that I was really ecstatic when I took over the portfolio for education. I met with the representatives of the DEA coalition. We held deliberations on the issues facing them and they were quite open to discussing

these issues. I am thankful for their openness and we came to an agreement that we would work collaboratively on matters that require our shared duties.

I don't think I quite understood exactly what the member wanted clarified in her question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Can you please clarify your question? This will not be taken from your question time if you clarify your earlier question. Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The DEA coalition receives funding under the grants and contributions category. I wonder if the minister can clarify her working relationship with the coalition. Does this include promoting initiatives for the day-to-day issues, such as attendance figures and school dropouts? You also mentioned school day scheduling. I believe you stated that you've had discussions with the coalition. I was wondering if you could elaborate further. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Ell. If that is now clear, Minister Aariak, you may respond to the question.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the member for clarifying her question. I believe it was clear earlier, but in hindsight, I was the one who was confused.

The DEA coalition, along with the Department of Education, signed off on an agreement related to the activities each will undertake, specifically in such areas as training on the job. If I were to

state it in English, it would be called the training working group. This agreement governs what will be included in this initiative, with all the details within the agreement, and it has been signed off. This provides direction on the path we will take in the future between the DEA coalition and the Department of Education.

With respect to the question about the particular details revolving around curriculum and scheduling training and school days, these are areas where the DEA makes decisions on in their communities. I wanted to inform you of this aspect and my deputy minister can add a few more details if she would like to do so with respect to the DEA coalition. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Deputy Minister Okpik, did you want to provide more details on this question? You may provide more details, Ms. Okpik.

Ms. Okpik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The duties of the DEA coalition are described in the *Education Act*. To use this example, when our department decided on divisions within their personnel, we had to include the executive director when we were choosing the positions that would fall underneath them. This is just an example.

Further to this, the DEA funding related to planning is laid out in the Act. Whenever school principals have to get together or when the chairpersons of the DEAs have a meeting together, we ensure that we include training as part of their meeting. As an example, we have held two meetings where training was

included, one session related to financial planning and we just recently started working with them on curriculum issues.

In particular, this will be used for training the DEA office staff that provides the administration for the DEA. It became obvious that more training was required and this was identified as a priority. So we are currently undertaking the planning for their training session in cooperation with the coalition.

These are the areas where we work together with the DEA coalition. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Okpik. Do you have any further questions? Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 107 in the business plan, it talks about implementation of testing, perhaps for recent graduates or to assess the kind of education the students have received or perhaps related to attendance issues. They also want to conduct testing on recent graduates. I would like to know if this initiative has commenced or what the status of this initiative is. I would like to know what has been accomplished within the business plan's priorities as it relates to legislation. Is it already an Act? I just want to hear about the accomplishments to date. It also seems to state that it will be applied to all schools. Is that correct? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The activities we have identified as future activities

within the business plan will proceed forthwith.

If I understood her question and if she was referring to the computerized review, I believe that the dates were chosen. The activities listed will be undertaken from February 28, 2012 to March 27, 2012 in the nine schools that are identified within Nunavut. For example, here in Iqaluit, the work will start at the Inuksuk High School on February 28 and the Aqsarniit School here in Iqaluit was scheduled to commence on February 29. The Ulaajuk School in Pond Inlet will be next and it is scheduled for March 5. The Nasivvik High School, which is also in Pond Inlet, will be next and is scheduled for March 6. The Jonah Amitnaaq School in Baker Lake will be started on March 12. The Rachel Arnngnammaktiq School also in Baker Lake will commence on March 13. The Maani Ulujuk School in Rankin Inlet will start in March. The Kugluktuk High School will commence on March 26. The Jimmy Hikok School in Kugluktuk will be commenced on March 27. These are the starting dates for the schools where they will review all grades from kindergarten to grade 12. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Do you have any further questions? Ms. Ell, please proceed.

Ms. Ell (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the same page, another issue... Perhaps it will be easier if I ask my question in English. (interpretation ends) One of your department's ongoing priorities has been to assist DEAs in developing and implementing policies with respect to such things as

attendance, discipline, and school completion. What progress has been made to date in finalizing and implementing such policies, and will all schools be implementing the same policies? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The items we are discussing are located under the *Education Act*, which has been approved and passed by the Legislative Assembly. It talks about the directions provided by the public. One of the recommendations was to give more power to the DEAs and that was done.

The DEAs are the main decision-makers on issues related to their local school operations, such as setting the local policies related to attendance in their schools, in conjunction with the school principals. They are also provided some assistance from the Department of Education divisional offices, such as advice on the type of policies that the DEA can draft up, with templates available for their information.

The DEA has to consult with the community prior to implementing any policy that they want to complete. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the minister and her officials for appearing before the Committee of the Whole. At this time, can the minister provide details on the

number of graduates who complete their studies? I wonder if there is a firm number and she ought to have that information. Additionally, how many students have just dropped out of high school? I imagine the minister has that information, so I would like to get that information. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the member for asking that question. To date and to make it more visual, comparing the 2001 completion rates, which I believe was around 22.8 percent, and in the most recent year, 2011, the completion rate went to 35.8 percent. Just recently, in the past calendar year of 2011, the total number of graduates who completed their studies was 228.

I currently don't have the numbers broken down into individual communities and I apologize that I do not have that information handy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell (interpretation): This will most likely be my last question, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to thank the minister for responding to my questions. In speaking about the issue of dropouts who don't complete their studies, on page 107 of the business plan, it states that a review will be commenced on the completion rates of students, which I imagine will include parents.

It states that a review will be undertaken and I believe that this includes

interviewing dropouts to determine the reasons why students quit and to try to resolve them. I would like to know if this will be included in the review. Can the minister provide more details on this proposed review? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In speaking about the review, the work has just started and it has increased over this past year. The officials are working with the communities and their DEAs. One of the items up for review is support programs that the DEAs can develop.

With respect to the actual evaluation process, I will defer that to my deputy minister to answer. The member asked about the evaluation process and the review of completion rates in the schools or the reasons why students drop out. I believe that was her question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Deputy Minister Okpik, would you like to add to that?

Ms. Okpik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In speaking about this review, specifically the completion rate review, it's still under development.

As an example, the recommendations listed for inclusion, which are not inclusive, I might add, identified to date include more math classes for grades 10, 11, and 12. Additionally, they want to enlarge physical education classes. In particular, there was also a priority placed on Inuktitut lessons for grades 10,

11, and 12. These classes are mandatory and have to be completed if a student wants to graduate from high school. These have been identified for inclusion. These will be included, as well as other matters included in the *Inuit Language Protection Act* that speaks to protecting the Inuit language. This includes the bilingual language requirements for students.

Other issues have been raised in the media, particularly over the last two weeks, where a discussion has been raised about the six options communities can develop for their schools. Examples include apprenticeship programs, lifestyle programs, communications and IT programs, and business creation.

Two communities have already started their pilot projects. In Kugluktuk, the first program is geared towards apprenticeship and they were the first community to undertake that. The other community that has just started working on an option for their community which is progressing in Rankin Inlet is the entrepreneurship program for creating businesses. The students are learning about the work required for creating their own business.

These are just examples of current work towards these options for the communities. We are currently working on these pilot projects, but it will change some of our detailed plans as most of these options are scheduled for implementation in 2013-14 calendar year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Okpik. Ms. Ell.

Ms. Ell (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 107 and I really don't want to just dwell on this page, but with respect to high school programs, perhaps it will be better if I simply ask my question in English.

(interpretation ends) The new high school graduate requirements have been developed. Can you describe how these new requirements differ from the previous ones? What steps have been taken to make sure that they are comparable to high school graduation standards in other jurisdictions across Canada? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Ell. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The member's question was sort of pre-answered by my Deputy Minister, Ms. Okpik, just previously in the earlier answer about the additions. She spoke to the details in the career and program planning program. I can supplement it further.

Here in Nunavut, the curriculum is a result of the Department of Education working with Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon, and Northwest Territories on requirements and where they will be placed. With respect to courses or programs, in conjunction with these jurisdictions, a framework is developed with mandatory course requirements included for completion of the course. The Department of Education also has agreements in place with the jurisdictions I just mentioned.

Additionally, Nunavut follows the Alberta curriculum for high school. For example, I don't even know the proper term in Inuktitut, Mr. Chairman, but students need 100 credits to graduate and every class they pass is added to their credits. Graduates require 100 credits and this is exactly like the Alberta program. Along with the credit requirements on the mandatory courses, the student is required to surpass that amount by three, four, or five credits. These are the based on their school hours and additionally they have to total 25 hours of community service.

The Department of Education is currently developing new alternatives and options specifically related to the types of courses communities would want to pursue as options. If I were to say it in English, (interpretation ends) the department is developing a secondary school multiple options approach which will enable students to pursue a set of courses from the program of studies or major area of studies.

(interpretation) I hope that my answers were understandable with respect to this matter. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. I believe the member stated that she had no more questions. We are on page G-7. K-12 School Operations. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is related to previous questions posed by our colleagues on the issue of dropouts. Let me start by requesting more information on students with special needs. Do younger children sometimes not attend school due to having special needs? I

would like to find out about this issue first.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At this time, this is an issue my deputy can provide more details on whether younger children have not attended school due to difficulties or special needs, so she will respond to it shortly. However, with respect to truancy or other support programs for children not attending school, it's also a responsibility looked after by each of the schools. My deputy will provide more details about children not attending school who should be in school. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Deputy Minister Okpik, do you have a supplementary?

Ms. Okpik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If we were to look at Nunavut as a whole, approximately 71 percent of school age children attend our schools, particularly grades 10, 11, and 12 having the lower numbers of attendees. We also have younger children who don't attend school that I have found in my experience. As I have been able to tour more communities this year, I have seen cases in grades 1 and 2. Sometimes quite a number of younger children are not attending school. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Okpik. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you. Yes, that was the information I wanted to understand. To follow up on the

percentage the minister referred to as the dropout rate or people who don't complete their schooling, I believe it's still in the 60 percentile range. I believe that you stated that this will be the subject of a review, as per the business plan, and it's related to an earlier question.

Do you have any idea as to what the main reason is for our youth dropping out in such high numbers? Can you see any developing trend or something that identifies the reasons for not completing their studies? Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have experienced this for many years when we look at the issue of truancy as well as the dropout rates. There are a myriad of reasons that cause students to drop out. A while back, there was a study on these issues, but it has been quite a few years since we revisited the issue, particularly what the reasons for dropping out are, so it would benefit us to conduct another study and try to find out the reasons.

Another matter I believe is very important is to try to interview all students who have dropped out. We suspect the reasons and therefore, we just start to speculate on the real reasons for such a high dropout rate without actually asking the people who dropped out. Perhaps if we went right to the students who dropped out, it would allow us to understand more of the reasons and have a better opportunity to resolve some of these issues related to dropouts.

More or less, the reason why I make that statement is because we have to understand that the reasons for people dropping out are quite varied and different as there is no one single reason for quitting school. Additionally, if we're going to be dealing with educational issues, we have to be totally aware of these barriers to our students.

The parents as well have their own version of what caused their children to drop out and they can provide their knowledge and experiences during our review of the issues. We want to establish closer working relationships with the parents as well as the communities to deal with all education-related matters. This is another way to ensure cooperative efforts are used, both for studying the issues and coming up with solutions.

At this current time, the program we call Aulajaaqtut that I mentioned earlier is now a mandatory course especially crafted to teach life skills. This program, we believe, will bear fruit eventually. However, since the program is new, we haven't yet seen what impact it has on students staying in school. We will have to ensure we conduct a review on the program since it has just recently been offered.

There are many reasons that cause these problems and it is quite obvious that we have to review these issues in collaboration with parents and the communities. Additionally, we want to ensure that we get feedback from students who have dropped out as I imagine they have comments that they can pass on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you. I presume many teachers may be aware of some of the reasons, perhaps along with the local DEA members. I think the teachers know more about the reasons. I would like to know if the inability to read is one of the biggest reasons that cause students to drop out. So is that one of the reasons? Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As to whether this is one of the causes, we don't have any information to that effect if that is one of the reasons why. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley: Thank you. (interpretation) The reason why I'm bringing it up is that we have read stories where some students currently in high school classes have only grade 3 or 4 literacy levels. I don't know for a fact if this is correct or not, but if we look at the national statistics, it states that illiteracy is one of the major reasons why students drop out. Have you looked into this matter or have you heard about this reason and, if so, what else can we do to provide more support? Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister Aariak.

Hon. Eva Aariak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for asking that question. Firstly,

one thing we do know for a fact is the reason that causes students to drop out is truancy. When students are not attending regularly, their studies fall behind and they don't complete all of their required courses, so they have a hard time trying to catch up. This is a very serious matter since attendance allows you to remain on top of your daily studies.

Moreover, there are different reasons for this problem, so I will defer that to my deputy minister to respond in greater detail. Part of my response was that one main reason amongst the many reasons is truancy and falling behind in their studies. If they're going to reach grade 12, the credits I alluded to earlier have to reach past 100 credits. When they are below that number, they don't get their diploma. It is indeed very important to attain over 100 credits.

I will ask my deputy minister to provide more details as it is a big issue. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aariak. Deputy Minister Okpik, you are obligated to respond.

>> *Laughter*

Ms. Okpik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will start by referring to our experiences when we were drafting the legislation for education, where we toured the communities and we also received over 100 submissions on language of instruction. One of the common suggestions was to place a bigger priority on protecting the Inuit language and it has to be a priority. As a result, the legislation now reflects that suggestion about prioritizing the Inuit

language, including either English or French.

We have to keep in mind that the bilingual education policy is in its infancy. All the communities have picked their preferences with respect to the language of instruction in their schools and the length of time they will teach primarily in Inuktitut as well as when English becomes the main language of instruction.

Back in the 1970s and '80s, English was the primary language of instruction in the schools. When Inuit started to become qualified to teach, we started trying to use Inuktitut as the language of instruction. The majority of communities chose kindergarten to grade 3 as the grades that would receive the language of instruction. Some communities went further.

For example, in Pond Inlet, they attempted to use Inuktitut as the primary language from kindergarten to grade 6. This was something we thought may work. We were happy to see that this was attempted. However, with the emphasis on Inuktitut language in the early grades and with testing done primarily in English, of course, the students were unable to catch up.

Because English is being used for testing, we have implemented the bilingual language policy in all of our classes so that they are able to use both English and Inuktitut simultaneously. As most of us are aware, children have no problem learning languages if they are taught at an early age and multiple languages can very easily be picked up at the age and it sticks with them. Due to that reason, all students going to

kindergarten will be taught in English 10 to 15 percent of the time and it will increase gradually as they further their grades. That way, they will be perfectly bilingual and that is our expectation.

As per our stated position, this bilingual education system will be implemented until 2019, when we expect our first bilingual graduates, capable of speaking fluently in either Inuktitut or English. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Deputy Minister Okpik. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you. I am happy to hear that response and it's quite a good message to listen to. As soon as I stated I was happy, I immediately recalled our friend's late older brother, Jose, who always enjoyed discussing language issues.

This is my reasoning on this matter: if we can find out early enough the main reasons for our students dropping out, then we can set aside funds to provide more assistance. Some students require more assistance, perhaps tutoring. If a person is not caught early enough, it may affect their aptitude towards learning. If a person is illiterate, then they can never improve their situation in life as they despise learning. Prior to the students adopting that attitude and before their lives are impacted to that degree... .

As Paul Martin stated when we were in Ottawa for an ITK meeting, if we can help government invest in literacy programs for our youth, we are opening up a lifelong door that can help them improve. Alternatively, once they have given up and we don't provide assistance, have we not lost this person

for their lifetime? We have to try to cut them off prior to the students reaching this stage.

I will have further questions later on as I enjoy this discussion, along with the responses to our questions. For that reason, I would like to move that we report progress at this time as I want to ask more questions tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. There is a motion on the floor. If you don't bother to debate it, it will be much easier as the motion is not debatable.

>> *Laughter*

There is a motion on the floor to report progress to the Speaker. All those in favour, raise your hand. Thank you. I will now rise to report progress to the Speaker.

Before I do that, Minister Aariak, it's obvious that you will need to appear before the witness table as we haven't concluded with your department. I would like to thank your officials. We will see you again in the next committee meeting. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out.

Speaker: Moving on with the orders of the day. Item 22. Report of the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Tapardjuk.

Item 22: Report of the Committee of the Whole

Mr. Tapardjuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 24 and the main estimates. Also, Mr. Speaker, I move

that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be agreed to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Tapardjuk. There is a motion on the floor. Is there a seconder? Mr. Elliott. The motion is in order. All those in favour. Any opposed? The motion is carried.

Item 23. Third Reading of Bills. Item 24. *Orders of the Day*. Mr. Clerk.

Item 24: Orders of the Day

Clerk (Mr. Quirke): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a reminder of meetings for tomorrow morning, a meeting of the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts at nine o'clock and the Standing Committee on Legislation starting at ten o'clock in the Nanuq Room.

Orders of the Day for February 23:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Replies to Budget Address
11. Petitions
12. Responses to Petitions

13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters >>*House adjourned at 18:05*
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motions
16. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
- Motion 22 – 3(3)
18. First Reading of Bills
- Bill 34
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
- Bill 24
21. Report of the Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Mr. Speaker, my apologies. The meeting of the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts starts at nine o'clock in the Nanuq Room. Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk, and apology accepted.

>>*Laughter*

This House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 23, at 1:30 p.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

