



Nunavut Canada

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NUNAVUT

Nunavut Leadership Forum:

Official Report

Day 2

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Members Present

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, Hon. Olayuk Akesuk, Mr. David Alagalak, Mr. James Arreak, Mr. Levi Barnabus, Hon. Levinia Brown, Mr. Tagak Curley, Mr. Joe Allan Evyagotailak, Mr. Peter Kattuk, Hon. Peter Kilabuk, Mr. Steve Mapsalak, Hon. Patterk Netser, Hon. Paul Okalik, Mr. Keith Peterson, Hon. Edward Picco, Hon. David Simailak, Hon. Louis Tapardjuk, Mr. Hunter Tootoo.

Nunavut Leadership Forum

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. I would like to ask Mr. Curley to say the opening prayer.

>>*Prayer*

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. You have in front of you the agenda. Do you agree with the agenda?

Some Members: Agreed.

Questions to Minister Picco

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Yesterday, Minister Picco was at the witness table and so I would like to ask him to return to the witness table.

Thank you, Mr. Picco. I would like to remind members that you can ask up to twenty questions. You can also ask the ministers all at once, or separate them, or divide the questions between the number of ministers. I believe that you have the figures in front of you as to how many remaining questions that you have left.

We finished yesterday and Mr. Picco was at the witness table. Are there any other questions to Mr. Picco? Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you. We know that with the Nunavut Education Act there were consultations to the communities. Manito Thompson and James Arvaluk were also working on this and so the Minister of Education is not the only one who is dealing with this; there are also District Education Authority, and the Department of Education staff.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education why he tends to meet with political leaders or mayors but not so much with the District Education Authority. I wonder when he visits the communities, if he could meet with the District Education Authority because they require more support. They are not just requesting funding, and I know that they envy other committees who get a chance to meet with other relevant Ministers. I wonder why the Minister of Education hardly meets with the DEAs when he is traveling.

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

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When I was first elected to the position of Minister of Education, I met with all school principals for the three regions. I also followed that up with the meeting with the DEA chairs for all three regions of Nunavut. At the same time, I set up an Education Advisory Council which consists of teachers and educators from across Nunavut, including Adult Educators and Early Childcare workers.

The consultation process for the *Education Act*, as one of the members mentioned yesterday, is probably the most I've seen in any piece of legislation over the last decade within government, which is inclusive of DEAs. An example is we've held DEA Chair teleconferences with our group, and right now, we've set up a steering committee.

When I go into communities, if there is a request to meet with the DEA chairs, I do that. The last several weeks of traveling I've actually been going to graduations. As many of the members knows, when you do that, usually there is an inopportune time to meet with DEA chairs, a lot of people are traveling, it is the springtime and so on.

Right now, the steering committee, which is co-chaired by the Government of Nunavut, as well as Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.; we are an equal partner on our processes, are putting together the next work plan now, and taking all the information that we've received; collating that information and putting the Act, as it were, together.

I think there is an opportunity to probably do more consultations, individually as a minister, but I think when you look at what's happened in the last twenty-four months, there has been tremendous amount of work done. I would agree with the member again that the work by Manitok Thompson, she's done yeoman service on the file, and she actually has gone out of her way to make sure that every face, as it were, has been touched. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Picco. Are there any other questions to the minister? Mr. Kattuk.

Mr. Kattuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I start I would like to inform the members that we lost an elder in our community today. He was Moses Apakak's uncle. I was told that he passed away this morning.

I would like to ask the minister in relation to the question that I posed yesterday in regard to energy. How can we use alternative energy and how does he feel about using alternative energy without using fossil fuel in the communities?

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kattuk. Mr. Picco

Hon. Ed. Picco: Mr. Chairman, the Members of this House have heard me say many times that in Nunavut we have an addiction to oil and we need to get off this addiction.

One way of doing that is look at alternative energy sources, and this is what the corporation is doing.

I have had the opportunity to meet with the new Minister of NRCAN two weeks ago in Regina, as well as the Minister of the Environment, Minister Ambrose. I discussed with them briefly some to the issues around energy and renewable energy in Nunavut. I have drafted a letter to send to the new Minister about partnering with Nunavut Power to develop alternative energy sources.

Right now, we are involved in some hydro work, as most members are aware. We have a consulting firm that is a leader in alternative energy, especially in the area of hydro. I am trying to set up a meeting in the next couple of weeks to visit South Cape, which is the largest wind turbine project on an island in anywhere in Canada or indeed in North America and that is on P.E.I. I was invited by the minister responsible to go see that site.

Right now, looking at the cost of oil, it's at \$73 a barrel. Last year, we paid several millions of dollars. There is information now that the members are aware of where the oil now at \$73 a barrel, which is considerably more than last year. We don't know what the impact of that will be on the budget for the government. We have to move expediently and look at alternative energy sources. The government is doing that right now. We believe the biggest and best economies of scale are to move towards renewable hydro energy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Kattuk.

Mr. Kattuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What regulations, if any, are there regards to generating power from wind or hydro? Has there been or will there be any study in regard to this?

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kattuk. Mr. Picco

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The issue around wind has been one that has been experimented with since the mid nineteen eighties. Some of the first wind turbines did not work out. We heard from the member of Kugluktuk, on some of the issue there where their wind turbine fell down. We need to ascertain when wind energy is viable in Nunavut. There are several factors involved here and there are technical details.

What I can say is that as minister, we have been able to produce a wind map with Environment Canada which tells us the best location for wind, as you need constant wind and not places that are windy for just a few days. This does not need to be a high wind velocity. We need to be able to look at the load requirements of communities.

For example, when you are trying to switch to wind energy in a grid system, there is not a lot of problems because is you turn on 10 megawatts of power and the wind and you need 30 megawatts, the extra wind energy is stored in the grid and it can end up in Winnipeg or in the surrounding areas.

In Nunavut, where we have no grid and where we rely on one power plant and the turbine is turning out only five megawatts of power and you only need three megawatts of power, how do you cut down the amount you don't need?

If you need 20 watts of power and the wind turbine is only giving you 15 that means the diesel generator has to cut in because wind is not at a constant speed that fluctuation can occur where you have five megawatts being generated or nine megawatts being generated; at the same time the fluctuation with generator causes the diesel generator in turn to compensate for that.

So Mr. Chairman, one of the big issues we have is, how do we provide that compensation? How do we get the technical logistic issues fixed?

Some of these have been occurring and as I said earlier in my discussions with Minister Ballo, he's indicating they have had some success with this, we know that there's been work done in the Faroe Islands, which is in northern latitudes, and we know there has been some work done in Newfoundland, and in other places in the world. However, there is still a concern with how that switching is done between diesel and wind?

At the same time we need to be able to look at all alternative sources and that is why we tried to proceed on a power front with hydro and the wind products.

Again we have had discussions with Manitoba Hydro on this. I also went to Winnipeg and met with the minister responsible, Minister Sale at the time. I have also had the opportunity to speak with Minister Chomiak from Manitoba Hydro on issues around wind and some partnerships. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Picco. Mr. Kattuk.

Mr. Kattuk (interpretation): Yes, thank you. My question was very short, but he answered it. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Mr. Barnabas, do you have a question?

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): In regard to the Baffin Divisional Board that was dissolved, a problem arose with communication. The people who were representing the Division of Board would identify problems in the communities and what they needed. They were also representatives of the DEAs, report to the DEA once they got back to the community as to what the headquarters were doing within the Department of Education.

Today, the lack of communicating or informing is very apparent. There might be problems with the Department of Education where they are not providing information. Sometimes the staff have to inform the community through the radio. The DEA does not seem to have any more power after the Baffin Division of Board was dissolved.

How has the communication been improved within that area? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Mr. Picco.

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, the member remembers when almost six years ago now when the Health Boards as well as the Divisional Boards of Education were dissolved. There were a lot of logistical as well as financial reasons for doing this.

As minister for the last two years I think we have had a good open dialogue with the DEA and their chairs through the de-centralized offices that we have throughout Nunavut. The DEA have an opportunity to bring their concerns forward to the regional supervisor and right up through the Regional Supervisor of Schools and make those points known.

At the same time, on a regular basis I receive letters from the DEA chairs as well as phone calls on concerns that they may have. The issue right now in regard to the *Education Act* is how much enabling power or authority do you give to an individual DEA. The DEA may be at the point, or in a position to take on more enabling authority, and some DEAs may not have or want that same responsibility. An example would be financial control.

You want to make sure that when you are setting up and enabling authorities that they have the capacity to take on that authority and within the framework of the *Education Act*, we have heard a lot of concerns raised by District Education Authorities about authority and about hiring, for example, teachers and principals in regard to terms and contracts.

At the same time, we have to be aware that there are other over-arching legislations with regards, for example, to employees. We have collective agreements with the Federation of Nunavut Teachers. We have the *Public Service Act* and those of precedent.

So when we are looking at communications as well as some of the workload of District Education Authorities, I believe that in the last six years, local communities have had more control in the say in regard to processes within the education format.

When the new *Education Act* comes forward, there will be lots of opportunities for enabling mechanisms within that Act for the District Education Authorities. This authority will depend on each of the District Education Authority's capacity, and in capacity building that the government can do with the District Education Authorities so that they will be able to take on more of that power.

We do not want to backslide, Mr. Chairman, where you download, like what was done in the late 1990s by the Government of the Northwest Territories through community transfer initiatives, which was supposed to be community empowering. It turned out to be community embankment of the communities. It was in encumbering communities and not empowering communities. A lot of programs and services were downloaded and the

hamlets were not able to meet the objectives of the programs and services because they did not have the capacity to do the work. We do not want to do the same thing with our District Education Authorities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Picco. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I represent three communities and some of the members also represent more than one community. To date, there is a parent of a student who complains to the District Education Authority and the teachers are members of the Teachers' Association. They have a very strong association to begin with.

The District Education Authorities do not seem to have any power to do anything if a parent makes complaints to the District Education Authority in regard to the teacher or one of the school staff.

What kind of power do the District Education Authorities have so that they can deal with the complaints that are coming from the parents of the students? What kinds of decisions can they make? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Minister Picco.

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The member has raised variety of discussion and concern and mandates. If I can give you some more hypothetical situations in regard to how it works.

In any given school, you have employees. Those employees include teachers, counselors and special needs. It also includes school staff, for example custodial workers, and the overall manager of a school is the principal and the vice-principal.

If the parent has a concern with an individual teacher, and that concern is raised for example, with the principal, then the principal who attends regular meetings of the local District Education Authority can raise the concern depending on what the issue is. For example, if there is an issue with a teacher swearing in class; that can be raised by a parent to the principal and would be dealt with at that level.

If there was an issue of criminality involve, whether sexual abuse, sexual touching, or physical abuse; that is a criminal matter and would be investigated by the RCMP, and there are processes in place for that.

If it's an administration matter, for example, a teacher is not showing on time for class or if the teacher is not using the curriculum that the parents believe should be taught. Again that's a school administration matter, that would be raised by the parents; it can be to the DEA, then the DEA chair then would contact the principal and say, "Look we've got a complaint that math isn't being taught in the school."

That would be raised because under the school ordinances that we have in place there are curriculum processes that has to be followed; mandated by the Department of Education.

So the DEA has a conduit role, as well as an advocacy role, and an administration role in the regulation, as well as the operation of a given school. What DEAs have been asking for, I think this is what the members is alluding to, is more power, or authority over its teachers, the staff, hours of work, and so on.

That's enabling administration powers and we will be able to facilitate that through the *Education Act*. At the same time if you're going to get enabling powers, you have to make sure that it doesn't usurp, or over-step other legislation and powers that are in place. The member is correct, for example, collective agreement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Picco. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This will be my last question. They used to be informed about students who are under the age of 16 who are mandated to go to school. I don't believe that the parents are informed about that. We see a lot of students and we see a lot of young people under the age of 16 who are not going to school.

Do you make sure that parents are informed about the mandatory attendance of students under the age of 16, if they are not expelled from the school environment? To date, we have never heard what happens to parents who don't send their students to school, nor do we ever have any information pamphlets going out to the communities. What happens there? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Minister Picco.

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In all the consultations that have been held in the last year and a half on the *Education Act*, probably the most divisive and confrontational, and indeed serious issue raised by many parents was the issue around truancy, the *Education Act*, and how we can have a hammer, or enforcement under the Act. The member is correct. Mr. Curley yesterday made a good point. He said there is a difference between drop-out rate and a failure rate. Sometimes, we use both of them.

If a student continues to miss a lot of school, if they only come on Mondays and Tuesdays and Wednesday afternoons in grade four, and then when they get to grade five, they are only coming in two days a week. When they get to grade six, they miss two or three more days, by the time they get to grade seven, they might have missed two years of schooling. They are not keeping up with their peers. By the time they get to Grade eight and grade nine, the academics are getting hard, the kids are dropping out.

Parents have brought this forward. The parents are saying that they realize that there is an issue with truancy, but how do you force parents to get kids to come to school? Some

parents have come forward and said, if you are trying to get a 16 year old kid out of bed, some parents are intimidated by the students.

Some people have come forward and said we should fine parents if their kids aren't going to school. If you go to a parent and say, look your son is not coming to school, your daughter is not coming to school and we're going to charge you \$500. How is the parent going to pay it? If the parent is trying to get that child up in the morning and the child won't get up in the morning, where is that responsibility?

The issue around truancy is a huge one. It's been raised. We are looking at, within the legislation right now, how we can enforce the truancy rules that are in place to ensure that children are attending school. If a child is not going to school right now throughout Nunavut, the school is mandated to contact the parents. For example, if Levi had not been showing up for the last four or five days, the administration at the school or the secretary or the school counselor will contact the parents and say that Levi has not been in for five days.

If the parents have not told the schools that Levi is going to be out on the land or Levi's sick, and is AWOL, then the parents would be able to follow up through the school. That is what happens on a regular basis.

In some cases, the parents are not able to get the children to come to school, and so that is a huge issue. In some cases, the parents may have not taken interest in the children going to school. So that is an education process between the District Education Authority and families and the school. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Picco. That was the request of my colleague. That was his last question. Mr. Arreak.

Mr. Arreak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman and Minister Picco, I would like to make a preamble. Sometimes, it does not work in our community. Even if Levi does not go to school, the parents are not informed by the school secretary and, for example if Levi does not go to work for a number of days the parents are not informed about the student being truant.

We would like to make sure that the students go to school on regular basis. I was informed by a teacher that they had received a letter that this particular teacher had to go for further training. Would the teachers who would like further training be able to do so? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Picco.

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In many of the smaller communities, people working in the school are related to parents and the families and the students that are not coming to school.

Sometimes, you have a staff at the school who understand any reason where a student may be a truant. In the case of Levi not coming to school, the school should be following up on a regular basis with the parents. That is something that through discussion here today, we will make sure that is the current, with our regional offices.

On the second part on the training, on a regular basis professional development for all of the teaching staff in schools occurs on an annual basis to the collective agreement. The members may be aware we had a huge conference here just this past spring. We have had teachers and educators across Nunavut up for professional development.

So training is available on a whole range of different professional areas, and that training that the member is talking about. Mr. Arreak has raised that training too can be made available to teachers or community school staff. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Arreak.

Mr. Arreak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to thank the Minister for his response. We hear about students who have not completed their grade 12 are 76 percent in communities. That is too high.

Students who turned 18 think if they do not want to go to school, they do not have to go to school. They believe they can receive income support assistance and contribute to their families that way.

I believe that the age of 18 is too low. There are some individuals who truly require income support. However, so long as the rules for eligibility to receive income support are too lax, this will continue to be a disincentive to seek employment or to stay in school.

Will there be any efforts made to tighten up the rules for income support to resolve this kind of thing? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Arreak. Mr. Picco

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to add that the Quluaq School in Clyde River, the member's home community, is one of the better schools when it comes to truancy and we are at 13 percent on a regular basis. There are over 300 children enrolled in the school from K to 12. This is because the principal is from the community itself. I think that this is very important.

On the idea that the children or student who is 18, there are two different contexts in where the child has dropped out of school at age 14 or 15. They go back to school at the age of 17 or 18 and then what we have is an 18 year old in a classroom with 14 year olds.

When you drop out of school at grade 9, then you go back to school, you can't go back four years later at the age of 18 or 19 and go into grade 12. So there have been issues surrounding mature graduations, but this is something that we are working on presently.

Through the Act itself, how do we make sure that those students are able to go back into the classroom? I attended graduation over the last couple of years where we have had 21, 22 year old young adults graduate from grade 12, and I would like to continue this situation in regard to individual circumstances of the student as well as the community and the school when we have the capacity to deliver it.

Under income support, we have introduced a good program; which is for young parents to stay in school. If a young person has a baby while they are in school say in grade 9 or 12 and they are income support eligible, we have funding available to pay full daycare costs. This is to help the student to continue their education. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you Mr. Picco. Mr. Alagalak

Mr. Alagalak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning. I would like to ask a few questions to some of the problems within the government and I know that the government is working very hard to get Nunavummiut into the workforce and to provide employment opportunities.

This is becoming more visible, but we are at difficult times as it seems like the women is getting into the workforce whether it is jobs or training courses. Women are working in offices, as teachers and in daycares that are always full. The individuals that try to live on income support cannot depend on that as a living because they cannot afford to get childcare. Even when they get employment, it is impossible to get proper daycare. The problem is that the assistance that is provided to them is not enough to live on, but at the same time it is very hard for them to find employment if there is no proper daycare available for them to use. The Income Support Program is being used by young people to discourage them from going to work. So I was wondering if we can resolve this situation.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Picco.

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Even though we have increased the income support amount by 15 percent in the last two years, I think its safe to say that for a lot of young people being on income support is probably not something that they desire. In a lot of our communities there are no jobs available. When you're looking at the peak employment time for most of our communities is during the summer when there may be construction and other work and summer relief jobs available. Many of our constituents take that opportunity.

Under the Income Support Program, there are basic requirements to be eligible for income support. When those eligibility requirements are met, then a person can go on income support. We are doing a review of the Income Support Program again to see if there are eligibility issues that need to be raised because, again, they keep coming up.

However, it's hard to differentiate between a person who comes forward and has no income, is living at home with their parents, and may be income support eligible and those monies help support the family.

So we have to be very careful of how we deal with it. I agree with the member that we continually hear about abuses of the income support system. Is the income support system set up in such a way that is stopping young people, especially, from seeking employment? Those are the types of questions that continue to be raised and try to be answered.

There are a lot of issues around the administration of the program and who are eligible. Those basic eligibility requirements have to be met before a person is allowed on income support. At the same time, if they become a regular client of income support, they have to come back to the income support worker with a form showing that they've actually gone looking for a job, where they've gone to employers and the employer says, "Yes, they have come in, and there is no work available." That's done on a regular basis also to show that the income support client is actually out looking for work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Picco. Mr. Alagalak.

Mr. Alagalak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For that reason, it seems like this is becoming a practice and the income support workers are looking at ways of how they can resolve the situation. They're looking at ways of how they should be doing this because we are providing them with income and these individuals are not interested in finding jobs anymore. Even though the income support workers lose their jobs or some income support recipients don't ever want to find jobs because they can't afford to pay for the babysitter. There are some of the issues that we hear. It says they stop receiving income support that they will get a harder and more difficult life.

My question is the income support workers, do they request or are there any regulation or policies that these people, the individuals who are looking for jobs, perhaps this individual can perhaps get into some kind of a program, or have an agreement where the individual recipient and the income support worker can perhaps discuss these matters where they actually had looked for jobs.

I was wondering if you had considered this kind of issue.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Alagalak. Minister Picco.

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just like every jurisdiction in Canada, the Income Support Program is a program of last resort; meaning there is no other opportunity for income through wage employment, or any other type of social program through government.

The basic eligibility to be on income support is that you have to be a Nunavut resident and you have to be 18 years of age or over. However, as the member has pointed out, if someone is going to the income support office and say I need income, and the income support available at Levi's business, and they go over to the store and the income support client doesn't try to find that job, or doesn't want to work there. The income support worker can look at the case and say; you have had opportunities for employment but you did not take them, so you are not eligible.

Under the Income Support Program that's part of the basic eligibility requirement. As a program of last resort, if there is no other employment available and you have no other income, you can become income support eligible. However, if there are available opportunities out there and you have not taken advantage of them, and there is not a good reason as to why you are not employed, then the income support worker has the opportunity to look at that case in a stronger sense.

I think that is the suggestion the member is talking about.

Any type of policy change or direction to the Income Support Program has to be made through Cabinet and then also, subsequently through regulation and eventually to Legislation.

So as I said earlier that is something we are looking at. We have found that the abuse of income support is not as high as some may believe. One of the big problems we did have is where communities have given up wanting to deliver the Income Support Program. We had several contracts in place with hamlets and many hamlets have dropped the Income Support Program and then asked the Government of Nunavut to take it back.

There are several reasons for that, including the difficulty of hiring staff because the income support position is a very stressful position. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Picco. Thank you, Mr. Alagalak, for your questions. At this time, we will move onto to Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to follow up on the issue related to energy and power generation possibilities in Nunavut. I would like the minister to put this in reality because what is possible is really quite different from theoretical issues such as long-range energy power generation.

I am not fully of the opinion that it is likely that hydro will be possible within ten to 15 years. I believe it is a very complex proposition because even if you were to focus and want hydro development in Nunavut, you could probably save one community. We need the Minister of Energy to put in a realistic plan, rather than saying to the people of Nunavut, yes, hydro electricity is possible.

We should not be taken for a ride, Mr. Minister. We need a timetable and we need investment. How much are you putting in? You need to advise the ecological groups this

is going to actually happen. You need to quit telling us that yes, hydro electricity is possible, and that it is going to serve this community. You need to start putting the details, the plans and quit speaking about the kind of hydro systems that are operating down south. It is really not possible up here because in some cases you may have to flood some areas. If that is going to happen, the approval processes that we have to get will most likely never give you a permit to do a development plan.

Could the minister be a little bit more realistic whether or not these plans hydro energy, hydro and wind power are really possible? If so, how much is he putting in to actually begin the second phase, rather than just talking about ideas of hydro energy and wind power? The minister really has to put some details in and begin to stick to that plan and convince that what he is doing is really is not a lot of hot air but actually offsetting the cost of energy in Nunavut. Could he do that? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Mr. Picco.

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd love to do that. If I could do that right now and I could go on for several minutes and I'll begin by saying that not only is hydro possible, it may be our salvation.

Right now, the member raises a good point, he says in one community. Right now, almost one third of all diesel purchased in Nunavut, and that's in the several tens of millions of dollars is spent in one community, and that's here in Iqaluit.

It behooves us to look at opportunities for hydro development. So when we look at, in Iqaluit as an example, and community consultations, we've already done work with HTAs from Pangnirtung for example, from Kimmirut, community visitations in all these communities, along with Iqaluit.

Right now, \$151 million or 20 percent of our total budget for Nunavut in energy is spent. So that's \$151 million. Of that, one third is spent directly, or consumed here in Iqaluit. So if you weren't buying an extra 13 million litres of fuel because you had a hydro project in place, that ripple effect would be felt across the territory because you wouldn't be buying 13 million more litres. You would be able to drop your electrical costs by several cents a kilowatt-hour, and that would have a positive spin off effect across the territory.

Right now, we're looking at several sights. To bring a hydro project to completion, it would take about ten years. That is the timeline that is used by industry standards, and there are probably 14 possible hydro sites in the Iqaluit area alone.

That's why we need to go in now and start doing the water flow surveys, the technical data, and so on. You need to be able to look at the morphology of the rocks where you're going to put a hydro product; you need to see what the water flow of the area and site would be.

So all those work have to continue. This year we're spending in the capital plan for the power corporation several hundred thousand dollars on these preliminary estimates. At the end of the day, a hydro project to be able to be brought on stream in that ten year project would be in the couple of hundred million range, probably between \$75 million to \$175 million dollars.

The pay back time, or the amortization period would be over between 10 to 15 years, and that pay back time, if you look at for example, if you were displacing 13 million litres of diesel, which is what you're using right now, over 10 years, that would be 130 million litres of diesel at a cost of about 22 million. You can easily see the pay back period. At the same time, the diesel usage is not constant.

What that means is that consumption in the community, and the load is increasing. So, if you're spending money on 13 million litres right now, Mr. Chairman, in 10 years time, you could project that you are doing about 21 million litres.

So that would have a huge impact across the territory because you wouldn't be purchasing that. So those are some of the figures; those are some of the numbers. You're looking at about a three-year time frame for environmental and technical aspects of the work.

And as the member indicated, it's not a lot of hot air, it's a lot of positive water development because it is renewable because we have the water resources. At the same time, we're having an opportunity to look at some other sites. I have been contacted by some of the mining companies as an example, out of my meetings in Cambridge Bay to look at some opportunities for alternative energy opportunities in some of the mining sites.

We're going to be going into Coral Harbour as an example, this summer with some of our engineers to look at an opportunity there. So we are trying to move forward, again, based on how much money you have in your capital budget for the Power Corporation, and based on if we can get more leveraging from the federal government, we'll be able to move a little bit faster.

That's why I indicated our discussions with the NRCan Minister. I know the member is supportive of trying to get off this addiction of oil, and that's the movement that we're trying to make. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley: Yes, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I look forward, as a Member of the House that he will table the detailed plan so that the public can be fully involved in comments, rather than having very few in the management of the Nunavut Power Corporation, the Power Corporation people and his

office involved in these discussions. There has to be greater discussion of energy resources in an evaluation of the service.

I would hold various public consultations and have community basically really actively involved in alternative studies rather than just allowing the figures that you have, which in somewhat outdated and not because the costs of energy has risen significantly during the last two years. So I figure it may not be correct right now. If it is not affordable for individuals nowadays to pay for energy without subsidies, it is even more complicated for communities as a whole.

The impact on communities is really quite significant as well for government, but the impact for individual consumers is even greater. So I would like to ask the minister, in view of the fact that energy, either that has been stabilizing at 70-some odd dollars per barrel, it is still not a secure source or range of an energy price that the public should be comfortable at.

Now, the public is being asked to consider paying an additional six percent, which was approved last year by the government. Power increases will be around 50 percent, I believe that was the case last year, and now this related six percent is going to be put into effect once the minister approves the recommendation from the URRC.

So, I am asking the minister whether or not he would consider changing the policy that the capital requirements NTPC should be put into capital authorization spending process because we can not afford to offset individuals, consumers cannot afford now to pay for energy costs as they are right now.

I am asking if the schools can be given capital spending through capital planning processes or government institutions can be granted a capital fund for constructing schools and hospitals and whatnot. The Power Corporation, in my view, is going to have to do that until such time as all these projects that you are talking about are put in place, hydro, wind power, mix of energy sources for generating electricity.

Could the minister put in place a workable plan, a fair one, instead of just allowing a very small consumer market to continue to pay for something we cannot afford right now?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, just on the information that has been brought forward in the House on the rates. The member is correct, there was a rate increase approved by the Cabinet after direction given by the URRC through the general reapplication of the Power Corporation last spring a little over 15 percent, at the same time the URRC noticed that the Power Corporation will be short about 6.3 percent in revenue and said once you have completed an external review and a lot of other information, we will let you act for that six percent but you have got a lot of homework to do.

The Power Corporation has done that homework; they have come forward with the external review report, and instead of acting for 6.3 they are asking for 6.1. Mr. Curley, the members' premise on capital expenditures by the corporation, I believe, merits a lot of attention.

What Mr. Curley is suggesting is that the capital plan for Power Corporation should not be funded completely by the consumer who we are trying to subsidize and everyone knows 80 percent of all revenue for the Power Corporation comes from government, official or ex-official. Mr. Curley's premise is that if we voted \$5 million or \$10 million in the House for the capital project, the Members of the House would have a better opportunity to scrutinize where that money is being spent and it would eliminate the burden to the consumer in Nunavut, because at the end of the day electricity is an essential service of government. It is no different than what we do in the Public Works and Services, for example, when we put money into a storage tank updating other community infrastructure. A power plant is probably the most basic, important, infrastructure in any given community.

I liked the member's suggestion that would have to be a major policy change of government, but at the end of this Leadership Forum if a motion indicating support of the House to begin that process of inclusion, then that's something that I would be an advocate for. I like the member's suggestion. I believe in the long term processes for the government; it would be a good one. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley: Mr. Chairman, the consumers are crying out, particularly I know, the elders, people that I normally visit really cannot afford it anymore because right now the elders nowadays, unlike the times that we were growing up, like some of my colleagues was saying that young people cannot even afford to have a babysitters anymore.

Elders continue to take that role. They take care of the young kids and so on, at the same time all the kids from school go to their places for lunch, and so on, because they know that they received an old age pension, and they have ways to bring some food.

Energy is really creating a hardship for many of our consumers in the communities. I would like to suggest to the minister that he does not need a motion in the House; he's a leader in government; he has a mandate to manage and recommend to the Cabinet; Cabinet has the full authority over expenditures of this government. Why does he not prepare to take the leadership on this issue? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister Picco.

Hon. Ed. Picco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I have taken a leadership role on the issue. What I suggested to the members through the Leadership Forum, this is a Leadership Forum, that I am prepared to come forward with the outcome of this and one

of the suggestions, I'm sure from this Leadership Forum will be the way the government does business and the leadership of that business, which includes the capital planning process. The capital planning process will begin anew this fall; that's when we do our capital planning processes.

I'm prepared, as minister, with support of the House, to move forward under our consensus government you want to have the consensus of all the members. You wouldn't want to bring something forward that you didn't have the support on. You know a motion of support from the members, if that's the way they would like to look at the capital planning process is to put a vote in the House for capital, for Power Corporation, maybe it would be just an alternative energy sources; for example on the hydro and the other capital projects the corporation would have to fund internally. There may be options and ways of doing that. That was what I was suggesting in my statement to the member. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Picco. I don't have anyone else on my list. I would like to ask the members if there are any other questions to Minister Picco. I don't think there are any more questions. Thank you, Minister Picco for appearing at the witness table. Thank you, Mr. Picco.

Before we move on to anything else we'll a 15-minute break. Thank you.

>>Meeting recessed at 10:59 and resumed at 11:20

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you and I would like to thank you for returning to this session. At this time I would like to ask Minister Simailak to come to the witness table and for your information, you have an allowance of ten minutes to make your opening comments.

For the information of the members, after the minister's statements you will have three minutes to make your comments.

Opening Remarks by Minister Simailak

Hon. David Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning Mr. Chairman, my legislative colleagues, and all of Nunavummiut.

When I ran for the Executive Council in March 2004, I ran on my experience in the private sector and spoke of the ideas that I wanted to bring to my town as a Cabinet Minister. I spoke about needing to have an open dialogue with regular members of the Legislative Assembly on major decisions in Cabinet and I also spoke about the need to work with groups such as the Nunavut Tunngavik and other groups representing the interest of the people of Nunavut. Lastly, I spoke about the need to involve elders, women, and youth, and to make sure that they were also part of the process.

In the last two years I believe I have demonstrated and achieved these goals and that I'm willing to listen to all these groups. I believe that I have acted on bringing about change in a positive way to better the departments that I have represented and continue to represent. I believe that when my time was over at Energy, and then Economic Development and Transportation, important changes were underway to make these departments more reflective of the needs and realities of Nunavut.

(interpretation ends) Since I became a Minister of Finance one year ago this week, I continued to look at the ideas I rolled out when I ran for Cabinet. I am proud to know that this government and the previous one have maintained a sound and conservative approach to its fiscal management. I am happy to report that the Government of Nunavut has never gone into a long-term debt. While governments across Canada and around the world deal with large debt loads, Nunavut has consistently paid for its operations and capital up front. Operating within our means has meant that we do not have to take money away from providing infrastructure, programs and services to Nunavummiut in order to service debt.

I am very fortunate and proud to lead the Department of Finance at this time, to build on the work of my predecessors and perhaps more importantly, to address key challenges that will help secure a brighter future for Nunavut and for Nunavummiut.

I want to provide some highlights as to what has been accomplished last year as Minister of Finance and highlight the three challenges ahead.

Starting with our accomplishments, I want to highlight a few key points. The first accomplishment is our budget for 2006-07, which focused on building a stronger and a sustainable Nunavut economy. Budget 2006 centered on strengthening the Nunavut economy. Our most recent budget promotes economic growth and positions Nunavut for investments, jobs and opportunities. I am pleased that the budget did not include any tax increases, meaning that more money is where it belongs, in the hands of Nunavummiut. It strengthens our commitment to sound fiscal management and responsible government and it calls on the new federal government to take immediate action on long standing issues relating to Territorial Formula Financing, devolution, and new arrangements for sharing revenues from Nunavut's resources. With the support of the Members of the Assembly, we will move ahead with the plans outlined in the budget of 2006 and 2007.

We will capitalize on the opportunities ahead and continue to pursue our goal of building a strong and self-reliant territory. We have been strengthening financial management across government departments and public agencies.

Strong financial management is a priority for me as the Minister of Finance and for our government. We are committed to creating a system that gives Nunavummiut full confidence in how public funds are managed on their behalf.

Several important steps have been taken in the past year. We have worked with the Auditor General to strengthen financial systems and to improve financial data. Initial

public accounts for 2003-04 were tabled this past winter and the interim financial accounts 2005-06 are nearing completion.

For 2006-07 and all subsequent years, public accounts will be done on time. I ordered a review, a thorough review of the government's financial management. The review told us how we are doing, how we can do better, and what needs to be done to strengthen our financial systems.

That resulted in the approval of the election plan for our government; a plan that was presented to a recent hearing of the Standing Committee on the Government Operations and Accountability. It will result in a series of actions to remedy deficiencies and improve financial management across all departments and public agencies.

When the Auditor General most recent report indicates that, "Financial management is certainly stronger now than when Nunavut was created." I take that as a good sign. A sign of good progress, but this journey towards sound financial management is not over, Mr. Chairman.

The Auditor General has called for strong measures to continue to improve our financial management. I support those strong measures. We have set aggressive, but realistic points to reach our destination, and I am confident that together we can make it.

Last but certainly not least, we are starting to see the results from sustained lobbying efforts and discussions with the federal government regarding Nunavut's unique needs. I have consistently discussed our unique infrastructure needs with Finance Canada in the context of these TFF negotiations.

The Federal Budget 2006 announced additional funding for Nunavut over and above what other jurisdictions received for housing. Approximately \$200 million over the next three fiscal years will be provided for housing.

That brings me to three key challenges that we will pursue in the second half of our mandate. The first is devolution of our resources. All Members of this Assembly understand that the best hope we have for the future lies in developing our minerals and resources and being able to keep the benefits of those developments here in Nunavut, not send them all to Ottawa. Pursuing a devolution agreement with the new federal government is critical to our territory's future and the future of Nunavummiut.

The second challenge is negotiating an adequate Territorial Formula Financing Agreement. Nearly 90 percent of our revenues come from the federal government. Territorial Formula Financing is not just a federal program. It is our lifeblood. We need changes to the TFF Program to reflect our needs and provide adequate resources to meet growing demands and needs in our territory.

Along with my department, I presented a strong case to both federation's Advisory Panel on the fiscal imbalance and to the federally appointed Expert Panel on equalization and

Territorial Formula Financing. Our case has been understood both panels who have now called on the federal government to make “extraordinary investments in Nunavut’s Housing infrastructure and economic and social development.”

The Federal Expert Panel has clearly recognized that the case for assessing expenditure in Nunavut is substantially different from the other two territories. They acknowledged that the TFF is not adequate to addressing the existing deficiencies in Nunavut in regard to health, housing, education, social infrastructure, and other programs and services.

There is also recognition that Nunavut will require considerable catch up effort to provide the most basic social and economic infrastructure. The report recommends that the federal government work closely with the Government of Nunavut to sufficiently address the challenges and gaps with respect to expenditure needs.

The third challenge is raising energy costs. We have been addressing this with the federal government, and will continue to address it.

To conclude, our government has accomplished a great deal since we were formed just two short years ago. I have worked cooperatively with both my Cabinet colleagues and Members of this Assembly to set clear directions and achieve important goals. I look forward to the second half of the mandate to build on what we have achieved so far. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>>Applause

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Simailak. (interpretation) You were right on with your timing. I would also like to remind the members that you have ten minutes, not exceeding ten minutes. Regular members may make a statement not exceeding three minutes in response. I don’t believe that there are any comments. Mr. Tootoo.

Members’ Replies to Minister Simailak’s Opening Remarks

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to commend the minister, I know as he is aware, as most members are aware that I’ve been strong in pushing my role as Chair of Government Operations Committee for better fiscal management, better reporting, getting the financial statements, and things like that done on time. I believe that finally some progress has been made and I’d like to commend the minister on that.

I think one of the other things that’s important is to see the stability and the teamwork in working towards accomplishing some of these goals and identifying it and being able to solve some of the problems that we’re faced with. I think that as a result of that stability and that strong teamwork and the leadership.

I think it’s crucial that accurate financial information does come out to the members because without that and even going to Cabinet if you don’t have accurate information

you can't make good, sound decisions. I think that's a huge priority for the government to make sure that they work towards that direction.

Having said that, I remember at our last meeting with the Auditor General when the government officials had indicated that for the last fiscal year there would be no departments going into a deficit; I think that that again is good to hear. I was very relieved to hear that. I think that the Auditor General and your counterparts in Ottawa see that some improvements are being made. I am very happy to see that.

I have 30 seconds left but I'll leave that time to someone else. I just wanted to thank the minister for that and we'll push to continue for more information. It would be nice to see variance reports or quarterly reports that your department does, and things like that to help us better determine how our resources should be spent. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. We'll now turn to Member Peterson. Mr. Peterson you have the floor.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you. Welcome, minister, to the witness table. My colleague said he would leave me 30 seconds but he only left me two so I will be quick.

I believe that finances are critical to the government and particularly this government. I was quite amazed when I became MLA, reading all these Standing Committee reports from previous years, a couple of Auditor General reports, and then we got the first Auditor General's Report in 2004 and saw how bad a shape we were in as a government looking after our finances.

It really amazes me how long it takes to act on a recommendation from a standing committee and recommendations from the Auditor General to improve our finances. It does not happen over night, it seems two years could take five years as we have seen. It is a slow, tedious progress but we are at a critical juncture in our evolution as a territory that we get a handle on our finances because now our budget has doubled since 1999. I think there is a little over \$500 million in 1999 and it's close to a billion dollars now.

We have huge financial demands on all our government departments for programs, services, infrastructure, and other things. I know at some point its going to get to a situation where we are going to have to look at possible cut-backs, re-profiling as the language goes. If we have to start cutting services and programs to the people of Nunavut it's going to really hurt.

I am not sure how the government of Canada reacts to all this. I am fairly certain they monitor our progress up here to see how we are doing.

As I mentioned yesterday, 90 percent of our funding comes from Government of Canada and so it is critical in my mind that we get a good handle on it. The Department of Finance has to be strong and deal with all the government departments and Crown Agencies to ensure they comply with all the legislation and laws that govern Nunavut so

that we can get our reports done on time. Our Public Accounts, for example, are very important.

I look forward to asking a few questions and getting your answers as the next hour or so go along. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): I do not have any other notes on my list you can make comments not exceeding three minutes in response to the minister's opening comments.

Last call for any members wanting to make a comment; I have no other names on my list. I want to remind members I will be informing you about the remaining total number of questions you may ask. At this time I will ask the members if they have any questions to the minister. Are there any questions? Mr. Peterson.

As I stated earlier on, I apologize. You have 14 questions remaining. Mr. Peterson, you may start your questions now.

Questions to Minister Simailak

Mr. Peterson: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I would like to comment on the minister's statement about the Auditor General in the Auditor General's Report. I would like to quote from page one of her report where she said, "The current financial management is weak and fragile." "Six years after Nunavut's creation I am surprised at how slowly financial management has improved." "The government needs to do more in each of the six areas." And then she goes on to say, "It has not adequately reduced the risk of error, bad decisions or fraud."

That concerns me. The minister mentioned that he commissioned his own review on the Government of Nunavut financial structures. The final report was released on April 18, 2006.

I would like to ask the minister; in light of the Auditor General's Report, her concerns after six years, and her recommendations made in Chapter 8, where she actually made recommendations on how to improve financial reporting and in light of the Government of Nunavut's own internal report. Can the Minister of Finance explain to us what specific measures he is going to implement to ensure that we aren't discussing the same issues yearly for the next decade? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Mr. Simailak.

Hon. David Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, ever since Nunavut was created we've been working on this issue. The Government of Nunavut's financial statements are improving and we're developing them further.

All the measures that we do are ongoing. Our staff is being trained on accounting and financial statements. All the department's finance comptrollers are being trained and they're continually being trained.

Also, the Department of Finance; we're not the only ones that deal with finances within the government. All the departments of the Government of Nunavut do have finance comptrollers, and we are now working very closely with them, and they are continually receiving training. We are now reviewing all financial management areas; we are also strengthening the *Finance Administration Act* and hiring more employees who are capable.

We're looking for more certified, capable employees, and we're still developing that. And also, we're doing a review to make sure that the funding is being used properly, and we do have internal audits and I'm very pleased to have been working, and to continue to develop to improve our financial system. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Simailak. Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Minister of Finance for that update.

The minister has made a number of statements there. I take it that these are commitments to the Government of Nunavut, to the Cabinet, to Members of the Legislative Assembly that those measures that he is going to implement are going to actually be implemented and there is going to be some performance indicators put in place to insure that they are implemented.

Can the minister tell us how he is going to monitor the measures that he is going to put in place and what is the time line that he has to implement those measures? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Mr. Simailak.

Hon. David Simailak (Interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, all the measures to improve the financial statements have been approved by the Cabinet.

Part of my statement was that implementing all the measures within the Department of Finance, and we want to deal with these as soon as possible. Some of these measures have already been implemented.

On some of the issues that I had stated have already been implemented for some time now ever since Nunavut was created. We are monitoring these, and also the department's finance comptrollers have been encouraged to meet with the deputy ministers, and this is ongoing, and developing.

We do expect that the Government of Nunavut's financial system will improve and it is still continually improving. To date that is what our activities have been on and also we

will be continuing to monitor the training programs for accounting and finance departments and they will continually work with the deputy ministers to make sure that we monitor the finances. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Simailak. Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister. Mr. Chairman, in the past, finance reporting by Government of Nunavut Departments and their Crown Agencies has delayed the preparation of public accounts. It has been an embarrassment of sorts. We have been 14 to 18 months behind in some years and we don't have confirmation from the government that this is going to actually improve. We hear that it is going to improve but we don't see any actual improvement year after year.

My question for the minister: going forward, what processes does he have in place to ensure that government departments and Crown Agencies comply with submission of financial records so that we can prepare public accounts? And if they don't comply, what penalties will the Department of Finance use to ensure that there is compliance with the Government of Nunavut legislation in preparation of public accounts? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Mr. Simailak.

Hon. David Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a number of initiatives underway to improve the process in regarding the public accounts. We are trying very hard to hire qualified accounting staff to fill what vacancies there are in all the departments and agencies. There are improvements to several key automated systems and interfaces, provision of more historical data, information for financial analysis and revision purposes, and so on. There are detailed year-end instructions to Crown Agencies, surveys of senior financial staff in the reporting for units to anticipate problems for early resolution purposes, close monitoring of department's and agency's compliance with the reporting schedule. So those are just some of the initiatives that we have underway to improve the process and we will continue to implement those initiatives until we are doing what we should be doing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Simailak. Do you have any further questions, Mr. Peterson?

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I didn't hear the minister answer the part of my question about what the penalties are if Government of Nunavut departments and Crown Agencies don't comply with the Department of Finance's directive, and Government of Nunavut's laws in preparation of public accounts.

My next question though, Mr. Chairman, concerns the Territorial Formula Financing Agreement. There was a news release yesterday from the minister, the findings of the panel report on fiscal issues. As we know, there has been two panels reviewing the Territorial Formula Finance Agreement or equalization payment process - there was the

Expert Panel and there was the Council of the Federation. Both panels have stressed the need for Nunavut to have special attention to catch up on their development of infrastructure, housing, and other financial issues.

The minister in his news release said that he is looking for a quick resolution to our issue with the Territorial Formula Financing Agreement negotiations that he is going to enter into with the Government of Canada. I would like to ask the minister: what is the Government of Nunavut's overall strategy to negotiate a new Territorial Formula Financing Agreement with the federal government? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Mr. Simailak.

Hon. David Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we continually discussing this topic with the federal government and at times we get the assistance of the two territorial governments of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory. We are in discussions on these issues with the federal government and with the new Minister of Finance.

I have met with him twice, to discuss this same issue, and also at the end of this month, the Minister of Finance will have the first the First Ministers' Conference to meet with the Federal Minister of Finance, and this topic will be discussed at that time.

And also, our finance staff that work with federal level staff members and discuss matters such as the TFF and how 3.5 percent was insufficient.

So the three territorial governments are combing their efforts to let the federal government know that this is insufficient funds, and also we'll continue to meet with the Minister of Finance and other officials of the federal government.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Simailak.

Thank you. I have no more names on my list, and to acknowledge the fact that it's almost twelve o'clock, we'll adjourn for lunch and come back here at 1:30 after lunch. Thank you.

>>Lunch break at 11:52 and resumed at 13:26

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. This morning Minister Simailak was at the witness table and I would like to ask him to return to the witness table. Before we complete your department, will you be there? Thank you.

Thank you, members for returning. We are under questions to Minister Simailak who is before us. I don't have anyone on my list. I would like to ask the members if they have any questions. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to follow up with the minister on something that Mr. Peterson was asking him about. I know one of the problems in the past is getting the public accounts done and getting all that information has been in delay in line with departments in providing their financial information to the Department of Finance to put together; consolidated financial reports.

I think we all know that the Department of Finance seems to be the one that get all the flack for not having them prepared in time but if they don't have the information provided to them they can't put it together, so they're like the messenger.

I am just wondering: what have you done as the Minister of Finance and as Chair of the Financial Management Board to make sure that those directions are followed? I think they're letters of direction when departments have to provide their information to the Department of Finance. What have you done to tighten that up to make sure that they do get that information into your department? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Minister Simailak.

Hon. David Simailak (interpretation): Before I respond I just heard last night that there was an elder who passed away, Paul Utatnaaq is his name. I would like to send out my condolences to the family. His son is Alexis Utatnaaq, who was an interpreter/translator for the NWT for a long time. He is an adult educator in Baker Lake.

We're constantly working and improving deadlines that we have to meet. The deputy ministers in departments have been asked to work on their departments and with our staff in the Department of Finance. We have been working with the assistant deputy ministers, and any comptrollers that they have in departments to make sure that they give us the information that we need. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Simailak. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just wondering if the minister thought it would be useful to have the Department of Finance provide those letters to Members in the House on when they're required to provide that information, also to provide a listing of when the information required by the Department of Finance. This will allow the members to put additional pressure, because right now, they could ask each year when did they submit them and we have no way of knowing.

This way, if there is a requirement that finance provide the information to the Assembly, it may give them a little more incentive because now, the public will know when that information is received and when it's late.

So it's not really a question, but may just really offering a suggestion to the minister on and it may be something that he could look at doing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Mr. Simailak.

Hon. David Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we will definitely think about the comments because the comptrollers in each department will definitely consider his suggestions to see if it would be workable. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Simailak. I don't think that was a question. So Mr. Tootoo, you still have 18 more questions. I don't have anybody else on my list. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome Mr. Simailak back. I just want further information.

For those people who are in the decentralized communities and if they're going to be recentralized, what will happen to those? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Mr. Simailak.

Hon. David Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are still working on the issue of whether we're going to centralize our staff or not at this time. We are still considering and thinking this over.

It will have to be approved by Financial Management Board and Cabinet, and if we're going to go through that route, then the comptrollers, finance officers in the communities will have to be replaced in those communities.

So the way it is set up right now, yes, it would be very beneficial to the Department of Finance if we were to go through that route, but we have to give this a very careful consideration and we are presently considering this, but it is not that easy to deal with. So I cannot say at this time whether we are going to go through that route or not. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Simailak. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would support this move because it would not only benefit our communities, but it would be more ideal if those officials were in a central place in Iqaluit because we just seem to be going around and around. I wonder when you will have made a decision on this. Can you estimate about how many months it will take them to do so? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Minister Simailak.

Hon. David Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I said earlier, we are considering this along with other departments in the different regions. At this time, we are talking about this, but I cannot say at this time as to estimating how many months it will take. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Simailak. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have been told by my constituents to find out more information maybe at this session in regard to the cost of fuel. Will you be dealing with this, as the fuel prices keeps going up especially within this year?

Our government bought fuel where it was \$40 a barrel and I believe today it is at \$70. There is an increase of \$30. I am wondering what the plan is for next year on this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Mr. Simailak.

Hon. David Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In 2003-04, we used \$69 million. In 2005, we used \$139 million. Just within two years there was an increase of \$70 million.

So we will have to look for more funding because of that increase in fuel prices. We will expect that in 2006 that the price will be high and we are currently looking into and working on this as to how much it will be a barrel.

We are currently working on this and if we have to help then we will when it comes to purchasing oil. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The subsidy we get from the government does not seem to be increasing, especially when the price of fuel is going up. I wonder what the Department of Finance will do about this in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Mr. Simailak.

Hon. David Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the subsidy is not very much, which was approved for a Fuel Tax and to be given back to the hunters and the private sector and fishermen.

I believe that these will be of some help, especially in the fall to those people and we have not been asked by other people or requesting to be assisted by different departments, but at this time there is nothing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Simailak. I also thank Mr. Barnabas for asking his questions. I have no more names on my list for the minister. There are no other questions. Minister Simailak, thank you for appearing before us and I would now like to

ask the next person to go to the witness table. You can now return to your seat. Thank you.

I would then like to ask Minister Aglukkaq to go up to the witness table and to proceed with your opening comments as soon as you get there. To remind the regular members your questions I will give you a brief overview of what the procedure is going to be like and after the minister's opening comments you will be able to ask questions not exceeding three minutes.

Minister Aglukkaq you have ten minutes to make your opening comments. Ms. Aglukkaq.

Opening Remarks by Minister Aglukkaq

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman and colleagues I have been looking forward for this opportunity to discuss with you my thoughts and opinions and to hear your questions. I think this type of conversation is important to our open and consensus style of government. It is also an important part of my being able to demonstrate my ability to this Assembly, to you, and to Nunavummiut.

Since 1999 we have been working extremely hard and making accomplishments. I have to remind myself of all the progress that we, as a government and Members of the Legislative Assembly have made since 1999. I need to remind myself that while we can talk about programs and services that we inherited from the Northwest Territories, or started them ourselves. They are really services to our people and to our people's needs and services that they have come to rely on.

When you supported me to join the Executive Council in this consensus style of government I believe you expected that I would join in ensuring that government was accountable to this Assembly, to the people of Nunavut, and to make sure that the services that people needed would be there for them, and to help introduce changes as the needs of our people changed.

To me that meant questioning all aspects of what we do. To challenge myself, my colleagues, and my staff, and that role has not always been understood by the deputy ministers, by some Members of the Legislative Assembly, or by staff that sometimes felt that they were being buried by questions.

It is my nature to try and fully understand an issues before advocating, or deciding on it merit. I believe in the term 'well informed decision.' It is my way and I think it works well for me. I think it's very important to keep doing it so that I could help to ensure that we continue to make informed and firm decisions for Nunavummiut. Nunavummiut should expect no less.

You know that I've received your questions and concerns and there are a lot of them. I've worked hard to talk to residents, to patients, and to staff all over our territory and I have learned a lot of things.

There are areas where we can do better. Approaches and policies that people don't agree with, or don't understand and there are a lot of examples of great work going on. Our staff are working extremely hard to provide support and services to our people such as individuals that come to mind, Gail Redpath has nursed for over 20 years in Arctic Bay and was recently recognized for her contributions by Health Canada.

Our staff tells me sometimes that they worry that they're losing ground. There are more people to serve, but not always more people to do the helping and that some of the things we used to do very well are not as reliable.

I have to remind people that we are committed to our improvements over the long term. Quick fixes won't work, and nothing should be done that makes the quality of services decrease or become less reliable. We want to support improvements in the quality of life for all Nunavummiut.

(interpretation ends) It makes sense to me to check every now and then to make sure that we are doing, and how we are doing, we need to make sure that we're meeting the day to day needs of our residents, but also that we are flexible enough to be able to respond to the emerging needs whether they are priorities of the Assembly or the new threats such as the pandemic influenza.

The most important lesson is that it takes people everywhere working together to make a difference; Members of this House, ministers, and our staff, communities, and residents. No single organization or individual can solve the serious challenges facing us in Nunavut, but community based collaborative efforts can.

And, when I say this, I think of the success of the Arviat Wellness Committee, how the *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* Symposium on Violence Against Women last fall helped women from across Nunavut strengthen the many efforts under way in their communities, and in the way the Cambridge Bay Wellness Centre serves other Kitikmeot communities and in the joint efforts of education and Health and Social Services to improve the support for people with disabilities.

So as I look forward to the next two years and beyond, I am committed to keeping the department's agenda focused to ensure in that we remain focused on the needs of the people we are serving, and to ensure in that we look after the people that actually do the helping, and that's our staff.

I look forward to introducing a new Client Travel Policy that provides the family members to offer their advice when the need for an escort has been determined and support a fair, easy, understood process.

I look forward to supporting training of our staff to make sure that their skills remain current, that their certification and credentials are current and nationally recognized, and that they receive the statutory training they need in order to fulfill their roles in a safe and confident and relevant way.

I look forward to the completion of a continuing care facility and to the establishment of the programs that will support our elders as their needs change over time. I look forward to presenting legislation and developing programs to support midwifery services that a prenatal and postnatal education and services to allow more and more of our babies to be born in Nunavut, and over time, in our communities.

I look forward to the discussions with Nunavummiut to come up with made in Nunavut solutions that will take place in all the communities as we discuss the health of our residents, their fears and their priorities.

I look forward to the development of a Public Health Strategy that supports the actions at a community level and that addresses the priorities of our residents when it comes to their health, their wellness, and their self-reliance.

And finally, I look forward to helping advance women's initiatives, supporting women in leadership, eliminating violence against women, and promoting education and health issues of particular importance to women.

Our challenge is to maintain a focused agenda that is influenced by the needs and priorities of Nunavummiut.

In closing, let me say; I consider it a privilege to be here, to serve my constituents and my department, and that I have worked with the Members of the Legislative Assembly along with my Cabinet colleagues, and I look forward to hearing your views further, and your questions, and receiving confirmation of your confidence in me to serve until the Assembly ends. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. As a reminder, regular members may make a statement not exceeding three minutes in response to the minister's statement. Please do not exceed three minutes. Are there any statements regular members? Mr. Peterson.

Members' Replies to Minister Aglukkaq's Opening Remarks

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the minister to the witness seat. My comments are that I know in the first year and a half when I was MLA, where you received the most concerns in my riding was from the Department of Health. The former Minister of Health, Minister Brown, can attest to that, in that I was on the phone with her and emailed to her everyday to bring up concerns from my riding.

The current Minister of Health, when she first got in here, also, she received a lot of calls/emails from me everyday. I would say 60 to 70 percent of my concerns were related to health. It goes back years; I mentioned earlier in my comments to the other minister that it takes time for changes to become effective.

I would like to think that changes were implemented when Minister Picco was the Minister of Health, then Minister Brown, and now Minister Aglukkaq are starting to take hold.

We've had a lot of improvements in the last two years. I think quite positive and the opening of the health centre in Cambridge Bay has been a positive affect in my riding. There have been improvements already to the Client Travel Policy; I used to receive a lot of concerns there.

There have been improvements just in terms of how people are more responsive and more compassionate to the people that call them for medical help. I would like to think that, with the help of my colleagues in this side of the House, and the various ministers over the years that they are just starting to take a root and will have a positive affect on our future.

With that in mind, Mr. Chairman, we still have a long ways to go. I, myself, have been patient of the health centre over the years and in the last few months, I go into the health centre and I talk to people there and there's still problems with the boarding home situations in Yellowknife and Edmonton, there's still problems with our Client Travel Policy; people are having to wait for months and sometimes well over a year to see doctors about important surgery needs.

We have elders in homes that need more help with homecare and need visits from doctors and nurses because they can't make it to the health centre.

We have people that whose quality of life would benefit significantly if our health services were improved overall. I hope that the minister's opening comments can achieve those in the coming years. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Mr. Alagalak.

Mr. Alagalak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank Leona for making an appearance at the witness table. Since Leona became the minister, we had repeated concerns that were tabled during Question Period or as general comments.

I would like to re-emphasize on some of the issues that we have brought up over the years in regard to health and social services, health in general. There have been a lot of issues that have not been rectified and we are sure that the government or the bureaucrats are working on resolving these problems.

In the larger communities there are a number of people that we have to talk to and who would like to talk to the government. Usually, there is a liaison group that keeps the communication open between the government and the public.

Since there has been no improvement, I would like to urge your department to make sure that there's a communication system set. For example, if we look at the Midwifery Program, it has been discussed for a number of years but there doesn't seem to be any mechanism set yet.

There have been training midwifery programs, but I would like to urge your department to place this as a priority and make sure that those programs are properly implemented because women have to go out thousands of miles to deliver their babies. There have been programs discussed, but we have to make sure that they are implemented and being utilized at the community level and there was another issue that I brought up in regard to the dental services that go around to the communities. It takes months for people to receive their dentures or to be provided the basic dental services and at times you forget that you have ordered your glasses and many, many months later you finally get a call that your glasses have arrived and you had forgotten it because it took so long. So these are the types of services that we have been talking about over the years and where there has been very little improvement. We have to keep working on that and later on I will be asking questions on these issues at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Alagalak. At this time we have Mr. Kattuk.

Mr. Kattuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also have a concern in regard to this department, although we have addressed some of the issues to date. I will still talk about Sanikiluaq issue, I am not too sure how it is with the other communities, but to date the issue of Sanikiluaq patients has not been totally resolved. It seems like the government has not resolved this issue so I am urging your department to seriously consider this. For example, on May 14 I had to go to the hospital myself to go for my appointment, but that was during the session, I was told that my appointment was going to be rescheduled. Is the airline that is being used for medical services a single engine airplane? I was told by the minister that it is, and as their contract stipulates, they are not to use single engine airplanes. In two times already, this aircraft, this same aircraft, came to my community on medical services, and in fact there are no toilet facilities on that airline.

As we took off, I was sitting on the last seat of the airplane and I saw on the back of my seat the individual that was going through a very difficult situation, and there was some kind of makeshift toilet and I am sure that the individual did not want to use that. I told the individual, I am not going to use that even though I have to use it, but this needs to be resolved. The Sanikiluaq issue is the issue of patients traveling from Sanikiluaq needs to be resolved. A boarding home in Winnipeg, we have also had a concern in regard to this issue as well, and at the appropriate time I will be asking my questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Kattuk. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome Minister Aglukkaq to the witness table. I, too, would like to state my observations that the complaint that has been posed has not been changed in regard to having escorts for the elders. I do not know why this has constantly changed. The issue of escort, it seems as if there are many more barriers, stumbling blocks occurring.

The community that I represent is a very small size and population. The elders who are not very many in my community; 85 percent of our population is youth and 15 percent are the elders.

Of our population who go out on medical travel, some have cancer, some due to their old age need to be sent out for medical evaluation such as going to see a chiropractor. Many issues are not being followed. Also, the boarding home Tammaativvik here in Iqaluit, I have been told that the boarding home is always filled to capacity.

Why is it always filled to its capacity? Even though we requested that this is improved; when they moved their transportation office to Pangnirtung, the Minister stated that they have opened an office here in Iqaluit. How come there is no consultation between these two offices?

I do not understand why the patients have to come here when the specialists come to Iqaluit such as cardiologists and chiropractors. They come here to the community and the other patients from the surrounding communities arrive to that community, too late to see the specialist.

In regard to Larga Boarding Home in Ottawa we observed that it has not been fully resolved, even though we made resolutions and motions to resolve the situation. The only issue that was resolved was the cafeteria or the kitchen. The contract holders, it seems, cannot invest huge sums of money.

The boarding homes in seven locations need to be improved. I had seen the other boarding homes that they had longer boarding homes, but down south they have shorter periods of contracts. So I believe that this has to be standardized.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Barnabas, your time is up. I must proceed to the next member.

I know that three minutes is very short, but I do not have another name on my list. Thank you. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the Minister. I think when I talked with Minister Simailak about having stability and a strong team in finance. The Department of Health is a department we need to have that in as well. It's probably one of the most crucial departments that affect the lives of all Nunavummiut.

I think it is one department where we really have to pay attention. I know in the past there have been problems with its going over budget or being under-funded. That has been resolved now. Last year there was a boost in the budget, finally, to Ed's rejoice. It finally came. It was something he, as former minister had complained about quite bitterly for years.

When we met with the Auditor General's staff at a public hearing the government officials indicated that finally this, the last fiscal year, would be the first year that even the Department of Health would finish in the black. So it is good to look at and good to see.

I know it seems to be, as Mr. Barnabas was saying, that Health is not an easy department to manage. You never know what is going to happen or what is going to be needed. You have to meet those needs regardless of what.

You can't just leave people, "I'm sorry we don't have any more money. We can't fly you out to the hospital there." or anything like that.

But there seems to be a lot of reoccurring issues dealing with medical travel; dealing with appointments; and specialists; coordination. A lot of those issues have been raised by a lot of members in the past, because I am sure that's one of the things that members here are concerned about the most.

We really need to make sure that we try and address those issues once and for all. So that they don't keep being, like what seeming to happen, it is like it is a reoccurring problem every time something happens.

It seems like there is no continuity in exercise. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Next, I have Mr. Arreak.

Mr. Arreak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would also like to thank the minister for appearing before us. The issue that we discussed or mentioned are very difficult to deal with and the Department of Health and Social Services is very difficult to work with.

The boarding homes that are used by Qikiqtaaluk patients need to be improved. As we keep stating it seems like they are left neglected, because many people out there expect to see many improvement when they hear that it's going to be improved when they hear the department stating that they will improve the situation.

When we hear initiatives such as improving situations, we will expect to see some improvements such as the boarding homes in Iqaluit and the one in Ottawa. And also the overseas nurses; sometimes the public is quite concerned about these Asian nurses in regard to testing them. Sometimes people ask questions. For example, in my community

there was an overseas nurse in my community. She didn't even know where to take the child's temperature. I am quite concerned about that. The nurse didn't even know where to put the thermometer on the baby.

These are some of the issues that we face and many times patients go to see a nurse and the nurse also diagnoses the patient. "Oh, you're well enough. There is nothing wrong with you. Go back home and come back when you get sick."

And this patient feels their illness and when they finally get to see a doctor and they're told, "Oh, you have a very serious cancer and you will have so much time to live." That's what usually occurs and I believe this should be looked into.

The issue that we keep mentioning is the issue of transportation for patients. We hear complaints daily on transportation issues of patients. Patients trying to come here and patients trying to leave cannot make it home. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Arreak. Responses to the minister's statements. I have no more names on my list. My last call to see if there are any regular members who would like to make a response to the minister's statements. There is none. Thank you.

At this time you can ask questions to the minister at the witness table, and we will let you know how many questions you have asked, or how many questions are remaining. So at this time, are there any questions to the minister? Mr. Kattuk.

I said I was going to let you know how many questions. Mr. Kattuk, you still have 17 questions you can ask. Mr. Kattuk.

Questions to Minister Aglukkaq

Mr. Kattuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My concern that brought up, for example, that aircraft that is way too small. It is kind of scary. You don't feel secure. Even though there are a number of people in Sanikiluaq, when I was scheduled to leave on the plane...and we were told that the aircraft would be bigger, and that there was going to be a lavatory on that aircraft.

And once I was scheduled to leave, and once the plane came in, it was a single engine aircraft. So I called the minister from the airport. The minister was not available, so I wasn't able to talk with her. But I talked with her deputy minister and I had to say that they're still using a single engine aircraft to go to Winnipeg, and it takes three hours.

I wonder: does the contract specify that people from Sanikiluaq are not to go on the single engine aircraft to go to the hospital? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kattuk. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the member for his question.

When the member raised the issue during session two months ago, I had committed to looking to see what the stipulations were in the contract for the medical travel for Sanikiluaq to Winnipeg. And the contract requirements at that time, I had researched, was around whether the washroom facility...there's no, I didn't check into whether there was a one engine requirement or not.

But the issue that the member had raised related to the washroom facility, and there is a requirement for that in that contract, but I'm not aware whether the types of aircraft models used are part of that requirement.

As you know, there are various types of aircrafts that are used for medevacing individuals in the territory, whether it be the King Air 100, 200, and that stuff, but whether that, say if one engine or not, I have to look into that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Kattuk.

Mr. Kattuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If you ask them if there is a washroom, they'll say yes. But it's a portable toilet and it's just behind one of the seats. I don't think anybody would use it because it's not flushable.

This has to be given a careful consideration because the flight is three and a half hours long depending on where the wind is coming from and if they are flying against the wind it can take up to three and a half hours and they do not have a washroom on board.

I almost refused to get on that flight, but since I have to go on medical, I have to get on. What I understood was that there was going to be a bigger aircraft that was going to take patients from Sanikiluaq.

I told the minister that they were using a bigger aircraft because I was told by my constituents that they were using a bigger aircraft. There needs to be improvement in this area. So I am asking the minister again, I wonder if the minister can inform me as to how long the contract is good for. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Kattuk. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand the members concerns and I had committed to following up on the quality of services that are being provided for the medical travel as well as medical evacuations from Sanikiluaq to the member in the House a month or so ago.

I am committed to providing that evaluation. I have also committed at that time to evaluate the terms and conditions of that contract. I believe the contract is still in place for another year.

Before we go out for another request for proposal for contracts, some of the conditions and concerns that the member is raising can be incorporated into the next request for proposal to address some of those concerns.

As it is right now, I believe that the contract is in for another year, but I can confirm that and, as my staff are listening, they can get the expiry date of that contract before we go forward. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Kattuk.

Mr. Kattuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To a different topic: the boarding homes. Under the contract, what authority or what power does the minister have over the boarding homes, especially when it comes to the food that they eat because they are not very nutritional food? Sometimes they are just dried food and that is what they are feeding to Inuit custom.

We prefer to eat meat, and sometimes they are not very satisfied with the food that they are providing at the boarding homes. I am just wondering how much power or authority the minister has in order to provide better food to the patients. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Kattuk. Ms. Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. From what I understand that the services provided by the boarding homes, there is some provisions there that try to factor in providing country food to the people that are staying there.

I had meetings with the folks in Yellowknife, Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Ottawa, and visited all the boarding homes in the last ten months. From what I understand, they do try to provide country food and sometimes country food is not available by service providers. So there is that sometimes challenge for them to get fresh caribou meat or char and what not, but as far as their contract goes, they do try and provide that and factor in the cultural needs of Inuit for country food in that service that they do provide.

And speaking to each of the service providers for the boarding homes, the challenge they had was getting the country food from the north and sometimes it's not always available. So that is something that they had shared with me but yet again, I can convey the member's concerns to the contractor for the Winnipeg boarding home also. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Kattuk.

Mr. Kattuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Maybe merely a comment, not necessarily a question; our constituents give us their concerns and sometimes it takes a long time for us to get a response because our constituents want responses, especially Inuit, they expect answers.

So as MLAs, the questions we raise should be responded to almost immediately because every time a constituent asks me something, they ask for a response and I just tell them that I am still waiting for a response from a minister. So this becomes difficult. Maybe if the minister, or the Premier, or the ministers can attempt to respond right away. That is merely a comment. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Member, you were already given a chance under statements. We are under questions. So if there are questions, please raise them because we already completed the regular members' statements. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you. I already raised this under statements to get more information.

The minister has been responsible for a couple of years and as Baffin region residents, before the new hospital is completed, there will be patients who are traveling down to Ottawa or to Winnipeg.

The people who have the contract for Larga Baffin and if they are going to renovate the boarding home, if it's a short-term contract; there are some that are under 20-year contracts and the one for Larga Baffin is a five-year contract; and if they are going to use money to renovate, and if the contract is awarded to a different company, then they would have just raised the monies. I don't know when that present contract will be terminated. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As it relates to the Baffin/Ottawa boarding home, as I said earlier, I traveled to all of the boarding homes that we use and met with the service providers. I also met with the current contractors of the Ottawa boarding home and we are trying to address the issue of building a new boarding home for Ottawa.

As the member is aware the per-day rates are covered by the federal government under the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program. In order to move forward on increasing the contract or lengthening the contract or expanding the facility, there is a need to negotiate a new rate for the Baffin-Ottawa Boarding Home, as we also move forward in trying to expand and develop or construct a larger boarding home, we have been working with the contract providers in acquiring property in Ottawa to start that process.

There was some setback in that the land that was being considered, as it turned out it was quite contaminated and we were not able to acquire that property. That work is continuing with the service provider and the contractor and we are working with them to expand and improve the conditions of the boarding homes in Ottawa. That is an ongoing initiative and we have committed to working with them to moving forward in constructing a new boarding home for Ottawa. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Baffin Larga that is in Ottawa is not very convenient, especially for the elders who are there for bone treatment and eye operation and there is no elevator in that building. Elders, even cancer patients, have to stay on the lower floor, and the less fragile patients stay on the top floors.

That is not acceptable, especially after having seen other boarding homes. They are far better and have good places to eat country food, so we need major improvements to the Larga building, so I am urging the minister.

One of the problems that we see today is about escorts for those people who are going to the hospitals. I wonder why, even though they fill out forms that require escorts for people to see cardiologists or bone specialists or eye doctors and because they are considered private sector, they have to arrange their own accommodations.

It would seem to me that under the Escort Policy, especially for older patients and people with cancer, they have to have an escort more than once in Ottawa, where there are unilingual patients waiting at the airport without an escort, they do not speak English and more than once where there is a shortage of interpreters, escorts end up being interpreters.

There was a couple who were just catching a few words here said by the doctor and the husband had cancer. In situations like that, how come the escort policy doesn't stipulate where people, patients need escorts, the elders who are the ones who tend to get cancer even though, why aren't they being escorted when the boarding home is short on bilingual staff when they have to go down? I wonder if maybe the minister can respond to me on that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. I would like to remind everyone to keep your questions short and to the point. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I respond I would like to recognize Kathy Hanson, the President of the Qulliq Status of Women Council, who is in the chamber along with Meeka Mearns who is on the Board to the Assembly.

To respond to Mr. Barnabas concern, I have been reviewing the Medical Travel Policy for some time. I have been in his portfolio for twelve months, this week and I share the members concerns and the issue around medical travel is not the concern. The concern is the issue of the policy around the escorts. I had received a draft that I have gone back to the department with to clearly review that area of policy around the issue of escorts because I thought it was a bit too narrow in scope.

I wanted an opportunity to look at and examine further what some of the concerns are of citizens around that policy. We have concerns around the language issues, concerns around disability and concerns about the age of the people. So I wanted to examine all the

issues that have been raised around the escorts before finalizing it, to try and factor in all the issues that are being raised not only by members, but patients and Nunavummiut.

I also wanted an opportunity to have the flexibility in that policy where family has input in deciding whether a patient requires an escort or not. Right now that is not in place. I am committed to that and I stated in my opening remarks that I look forward to presenting a client travel policy to the house. I share the members concerns and hopefully within the next few weeks or months I would be able to present that to this House. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Barnabas you have 11 more questions you can pose to the ministers.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just recently, I traveled with an elder who was going to have an escort but the escort did not know because this escort was young and she wanted to bring one of her children. And the reason why she could not escort the elder was because she had a child she wanted to bring.

Why were the communities not informed that escorts are not allowed to bring children, if they have to pay for the transportation of the child, it is over a thousand dollars to bring a child with you. In the end, she could not pay for the child and the elder ended up being under our care. Her final destination was here in Iqaluit, and if her final destination were Ottawa she would have been in a lot of trouble.

It seems there are more and more challenges around the Medical Travel Policy. If there are any changes to the policy we would like to be informed.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Ms. Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The policy that was presented 2002 is still in place until such time I put forth a new policy around escorts for medical patients.

Every case is different. I do not know the specifics of the one he is referring to, but I can speak to the policy issue on medical travel. Where there is a need for assistance in traveling a medical escort is provided as it is right now. There are questions on when that happens; is it for people with disability, for age and so on. I have asked my officials to examine all the issues that are raised around the Escort Policy as it is.

In terms of responding to the specifics of a person, patient, I don't know the details that the member is referring to, and I can certainly look into that. I do know that in deciding whether a person could provide the escort or not, is one that has been raised in the past.

When people go down to escort a patient, they're expected to provide assistance to the individual that they are escorting, whether it be in the hospital or in the boarding home, and so on.

I know in the past, there have been some concerns around whether they can bring their children along when they escort a patient. Under the current medical travel, Non-Insured Health Benefits, those costs are not covered.

So in the past I know that they've resorted to identifying another person that can be the escort to provide that assistance. So there are those kinds of debates that have gone on. So as it relates to individuals, specific constituency concern, I can get that information from him and follow up to see what was provided and what was not. I can't speak to that particular specific question, but rather, I can speak to the policy and what it is right now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister indicated that one of the individuals who have been working in Arctic Bay was recognized. I'm very well aware of the people that are there and who are going to need the assistance.

I'm not exactly sure how it is, but can you not believe the head nurse when they say this patient needs an escort when they're going for cancer treatment, chemo, or if they have disabilities?

This head nurse knows exactly whether this patient needs an escort or not. So how do you go about making decisions on whether the patient needs an escort or not? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Ms. Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Each community health centre, in sending patients out, would make that determination, whether a person requires an escort or not.

So those individuals at the community level that are treating the patients are the ones that would apply that policy or not. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's very obvious then, those patients who require chemo or are physically handicapped need an escort under that policy.

Are you going to be making changes to the Escort Policy so that it's all outlined in there, or what are you going to be doing about it? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will go forward with the Client Travel Escort Policy to this House.

Like I said earlier, I had provided a draft some time ago, but, I've asked my staff to re-examine the portion on the escorts because of various issues such as the one that the member has raised, and I have committed to providing that information to this House. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Moving onto another subject, I would like to give the other Members of the Legislative Assembly an opportunity to ask questions.

For those in the non-decentralized communities, we're only given material or some kind of facility when everything's falling apart. For example, the nurses and the government employees, they are usually given medical insurance through their employers.

What about the residents of the non-decentralized communities where they have very, old healthcare centres? What are you going to be doing about that?

Chairman (Interpretation): Thank you. Ms. Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Around the health centre facility in Arctic Bay, that project design stage feasibility study is in the capital estimates and we are trying to move forward amongst all the other priorities for capital projects for the Nunavut territory. For that particular item, it is in the capital estimates; five-year capital plan to start the process of evaluating and the whole design of the health centre. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Aglukkaq. Mr. Barnabas has completed his questioning. I have no more names on my list. I ask again if there are any other questions. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be interested to hear the minister's views on the chronic continuum of concerns within the Department of Health when it comes to patient services, medical travel, and things like that.

I want to ask the minister of what, in her view, is causing these problems, if there are any policies in place supposedly for some of these things. I am just wondering from her point of view, as the minister for that department, what she thinks maybe some of the causes for us always having to hear these types of concerns from people. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the member's concern and for the question, because I think that far too often we don't have the discussions around some of those issues and I have been in this portfolio in the first fiscal year, June of last year to March, and this new fiscal year, so its 12 months this week.

Well into the portfolio and listening to all the concerns being made, have been presented to this House. Some of the initiatives that I've been trying to do since being in this portfolio is learn more about what the grass issues are through consultation with the staff officials, as well as members of this House, and trying to make sense of the issues that you have presented to me in how we do business in health.

At the same time, I have also gone and talked to outside community organizations, such as all the chair people of health committees in Nunavut, to discuss with them some of their issues around keeping people healthy and what we can do to focus our energy within the Department of Health around keeping people healthy. We are in the health system and how we can start to shift some of those.

Some of the problems that I see are related to structure of the organization. Some functions over the last seven years have been centralized in that managers in the regions are not able to respond as quickly as they should to various issues. Centralizing of authority around escorts and the talk around centralizing other functions to me at the end of the day, Nunavummiut want an organization that ensures quality of services around health issues and in other cases, the challenges that are faced could be around increasing population, increasing health indicators throughout and trying to keep up the services as we grow. So there are a number of factors out there so it is not one particular item, but a number of areas, and this is where I go back and look to see where we are and how we are doing.

I think in the last 12 months I have been able to learn that in some areas we are doing very well, in other areas there is a lot of things that we need to address, to fix, and one example could be around the social workers, their work loads, other areas around the facilities that we contract out and nursing. So there are a number of areas but at the end of the day, I think, it is very important to focus those energies of the people that we have, to where the most needs are and that is an area of service.

For the last 10 to 12 months, I have been learning as much as I can on some of the graph issues and challenges that are faced by the health care providers. At the same time, every concern or constituency concern or patient concern that is raised, to me, indicates that there are areas that need to be addressed and/or needs to be fixed. So it is difficult to answer that one particular question, what is it, in one piece, it is a number of factors across the board, and some regions are doing better than others and others are not doing as well. I am working with the teams of the three regions and trying to get a handle on some of these issues and it has been a challenge, there is no doubt about that. I have committed to trying to focus the little resources that we do have in areas where it is most needed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Aglukkaq. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know I mentioned in my comments and also with finance and I think some of this success is that they seen is due to the good strong teamwork and some stability within the senior officials within the department. I guess I'm still surprised that I had never heard of one of the problems that the minister may have thought could be a leading problem and that could be because of a high turnover in staff and Department of Health. I know they are always looking for people to work in the field, and the government is having a hard time in recruiting nurses, and some of the senior officials are leaving. It seems like you make some progress and then there is a lack of someone there, it's like one step forward and two steps backwards.

You see that a lot within the government with the high turnover rates, so I think that is something that could be leading to some of those issues and maybe blocking some of those successes that we are seeing in the finance department from happening. Just to ask the minister: she has indicated that she has been there about a year now, has there been a lot of turnover in her senior staff at the department, how many senior officials? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Ms. Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to go back and when I talked about limited resources and focusing the energy, I guess I included the staff, the limited staff.

Yes, there's turnover within the Department of Health, we are challenged like any other department to keep people in the organization. I think the member knows the deputy left on January 24 or 25 and the hospital director left. Those are the two senior officials that I know of within the department that has left, and the ADM moved back to Finance.

So from the 12 months, those are the three senior officials that I'm aware of that have moved, but that's not including the people that are at the frontlines providing the service to the communities and there is turnover in those areas also. So the Department of Health is not immune to that and yes, it is a challenge that we have to face and deal with regularly. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A question that was asked yesterday and I had an interesting question so I figure I'm going to ask it again today. This is a leadership review so I'll ask the question.

I'm just wondering if you could describe your leadership style you have within your department, with your staff, and with your colleagues what type of a leadership style do you use with your team. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The approach I try to take in doing this job is to question issues that are before us. I think it's very important as elected officials in our capacities that in anything that we do we need to make an informed decision on every aspect of it. I have tried to engage in finding out issues throughout the organization, and that's not limited to just speaking to one particular person in the organization; it's involving discussions at all levels of staff and community.

I think the style that I have liked and I have used, is to question all aspects of what we do and I think part of my job in responding to your questions in this House is to also question my staff, my colleagues and co-workers.

In order for me to do my job affectively to you and to respond to your concerns and challenges that you bring to me, I have to learn as much as I can on those issues within the organization before I can make an informed decision. So if you question me, my job is to also question people I work with, people who are advising me, and people that are researching.

I think that all just goes back to the style of government we operate under. We are a consensus government and the approach in how we solve problems I think is to arrive at a consensus on issues before decisions are made, and that's the approach that I have tried to take.

People call me for issues, I have tried to respond to people that call me, I have an open door policy on questions from people in the community, whether it be my colleagues here and/or constituents from various regions. I try and respond to as many concerns or direct individuals to the appropriate member, or minister, or organization. I think part of it also is to listen to what is being asked in the House to get a feel for what the challenges are and provide a response. I take my job very seriously and I try and respond in this House to the questions that are being raised by my colleagues, and, or, follow up to members and working with the staff within the organization and directing officials to where I think it needs to go based on direction I'm receiving from my Cabinet colleagues, as well as Members of this House. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that response. I think it will probably come as no surprise to anyone here that you can't undervalue the value of asking good questions.

I think, given that, and even within your department, and with officials, and you ask questions, you don't always get the answers that you want to get, or you don't agree with a recommendation that is brought forward after, for whatever reason.

I'm just wondering if there have been any occasions since you took office as minister that you didn't agree with recommendations that were made by your senior officials, if you don't agree with the recommendation that they're making, what happens. How do you handle that?

My 13 year old daughter, she goes, "Talk to the hand dad." I try to deal with her with that. So if I could just get an idea how you would have, if you had to, handle situations like that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. We will let the minister take this question before we break, and then we'll come back to questions after. With that, Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it is also important. If there is any new policy or direction that comes before my way, and I'm being advised on various policy issues of the department, although I'm not going to speak to one particular issue, I think in all that we do in this job, the job is to question what is before us. If there are no answer, then that is an indicator that we need to do our homework a bit more.

I will question policy decisions or directions that I'm receiving, and until such time that I'm satisfied that that is the right one based on what I know as X, Y, Z. If there are officials that are coming forward with a decision, or a policy direction and I'm asking questions and they're not able to answer, that's an indication that there is more homework to be done.

So in that way, I say we go back before I present this because if I can't get the answers to my questions, I can't give the answers to you and to my colleagues.

So that's the approach I have taken in that. I'll give you a specific example of a direction that was presented to me by my former deputy that I did not agree with. I think was a political decision that needed to be made, and, where this individual thought otherwise.

The decision and the direction to move and centralizing travel arrangements for Nunavummiut. The proposal was to transfer medical travel administration from the Kitikmeot, Kivalliq, and Baffin to Winnipeg.

I didn't agree with that at all and advised the officials that this was a political decision. It will involve moving positions from the north to Manitoba that I did not agree with, and they did otherwise. I was not prepared to put forward that policy direction to my Cabinet colleagues or the Financial Management Board because our government is committed to keeping jobs in the North and supporting a decentralized model of governance. Knowing that, I directed my staff that this is not an option that I was willing to entertain. That's one example.

In areas where there are issues where you don't agree. We work in a consensus model of governance and my approach to it is that we have to arrive at a consensus, whether it's in

this House; whether it's dealing with a hamlet; or whether it's dealing with Financial Management Board, or to Cabinet and my staff.

I think the key is to arrive at a consensus on what's the best decision for that day, at that time, based on the variables before us.

That is the approach that I've tried to take in doing this job. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Aglukkaq. With that we will break for 15 minutes. Thank you, colleagues.

>>Meeting recessed at 15:01 and resumed at 15:22

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, colleagues. Thank you for returning. We will continue on with Minister Aglukkaq. If Mr. Tootoo has any more questions he can proceed.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think another good quality of a leader, it doesn't matter if you're a minister or anybody, I think that you need to take a look and recognize things that you could have done better afterwards. Hindsight is always a wonderful thing, especially in hockey games, but if there is an incident or when maybe the minister had recognized something that now she would have looked at handling differently or better in the past, and I'm just wondering if there's one thing that you would have done differently as a minister since you took office in 2004. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's also important to recognize in this system of how we operate in consensus-model governance and so on that decisions are arrived at on various issues, whether it be to program policies and what not as a collective group through Cabinet, through Financial Management Board. I suppose there are always areas that we can do better in hindsight, but I own up to every decision that I've made on various issues.

I think it's also important to look at positions and policies that are presented where feedback is received from members on a regular basis through standing committee appearances, through committee appearances, and so on where those recommendations are always methods used to improve decisions of the task. So in everything that we do, I take the recommendations that come before me as ways to improve decisions I have made, as well as this government on various issues.

I do not own one decision by myself. A lot of times it involves many, many people to arrive at decisions. That is the model I have tried to work under as to how we do things in decisions that affect many, many people. I think it is important to get as much feedback

on various decisions we make, or directions we are going, before we make decisions on them.

There is lots of work to be done. There are tough issues to be dealt with and we are working Qulliq Status of Women Council on the symposium and so on. I suppose on stuff like that sooner than later would have been better.

In everything that I do, I try and own up to decisions I have made to Inuit Government. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Hon. Aglukkaq. Mr. Tootoo, you have more?

Mr. Tootoo: I do. Thank you Mr. Chairman. It's when commitments are made by yourself or your department officials to individuals, groups, or societies.

What kind of a process is it? Is it normal if commitment was made to an organization or society that they would have to wait a year to get any feedback?

How do you go through that process with your staff, if there has been a commitment made, to follow up on it and not leave people hanging for over a year? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Ms. Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is difficult to respond to that in a hypothetical scenario. I have been in this position, in this portfolio for 12 months. I like to try and respond to as many concerns that are raised and so on from members and the general public on a timely basis.

But recognizing sometimes it take time to research some of the concerns raised by individuals or organizations.

Perhaps if the member could be a bit more specific on an issue I could respond to the timeline and process. Every scenario is different, every case different, every patient care or client is different.

Perhaps the member could share with me what specific situation or policy he is thinking of that would be useful. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: To help the minister, I am talking about the elders home and the group home here. There appears to have been commitments made by the Department of Health, by the former deputy mentioned a lot of other senior staff that have left are mentioned in there as making these commitments well over a year ago and they are still waiting.

I just wonder if I can get an idea of, I am looking so much for this particular statement in general, but if you now providing the case to the minister. I guess it may help, sir, to be able to do that. That would be great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I received a correspondence on Friday last week around that particular issue that the member is referring to, seriously, in this portfolio in examining some of the pressure points that the department has been under.

One of the things that actually were raised in the last session two months ago by other members were around the care and the facilities that we operate in. Recognizing that we need to evaluate and provide support and monitor how we provide services to people in our care, whether they are within territory or out-of-territory, I had directed my staff at that time to start the evaluation of all the facilities that are operating in Nunavut to look at what training needs are required, whether their funding needs are adequate, and what support they need, whether it be through further training or finance and so on, that work is ongoing.

As it relates to the particular concern that the member has raised, the officials around that type of discussion have been meeting with the elders' facility on a regular basis. The staff from Pangnirtung, the executive director, as well as the director from here responsible for those services have had discussions with not only the contractor but the people that provide the service.

So that letter I received on Friday is not necessarily up to date and accurate in that we have not responded. We have responded and the staff has met with the providers to try and address from the elders as well as the service providers around training, around resources, and so on.

So when the matter was raised back in I believe in the November session or the last March-April session, the staff were directed to start the follow-up process. We did not wait a year, and in fact, I'm in the process of providing a response to the executive director that I received the letter from and who copied every single Member of this House.

So I will cc every Member of this House when the meetings took place and so on. So the process is to initiate the review of any complaints or concerns that are presented. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Madam Aglukkaq. (interpretation) Do you have more Mr. Tootoo?

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm winding down.

I'm just wondering if I could ask the minister, I know I mentioned in my first opening comments about the importance of everybody working as a team for a common goal for the benefit of all Nunavummiut, which is why we are here.

Given those comments and the comments the ministers made on the type of government that we have, that's a consensus-style government, and I'm just wondering if she could describe what her working relationship is with her Cabinet colleagues and how she would classify that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think in my opening remarks I covered my style of how I would like to try and conduct myself in arriving at decisions here.

I think the member...I was elected to respond to their issues, as well as questions that are raised in this House, and to arrive at that is to question all aspects of what's before you. I think my Cabinet colleagues will know that I question them and just like they would question me on what portfolios that it is the responsibility that I take on myself to ask questions and I make an informed decision on behalf of Nunavummiut when I'm at that table. They don't always agree with me and I don't always agree with them, but I respect the fact that we work in a consensus model of governance and there is an important piece of Cabinet solidarity when decisions are made and I honour that and I respect that.

At the discussions, I think it's important to answer difficult questions and not just simple questions and I would like to think that that's what I offer to that table. I think Nunavummiut would not expect anything less of me or nor my colleagues. I go on that principle in how I do my job.

Sometimes the issues are not always easy but on consensus governance that the approach I think that we all take in how we do our job, but that's what makes our governance model very unique to other jurisdictions. It's not a party line but rather what is best for Nunavut or Nunavummiut on this particular time on those variables.

So that's the model I go with. I don't always agree with my colleagues, and likewise, but it's one that I think that works well for Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My last question for now, unless something else comes to me. I asked about your working relationship and that with your Cabinet colleagues, but how would you describe your working relationship with us, the Regular Members of the Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I try and take this job at a professional level. I try and maintain a professional relationship with my colleagues. In responding to the member's concerns, I try and respond to every one of your questions in this House and I think during session, I've tried to answer every question of me and follow through with the commitments that I have made.

Outside of session I don't go hang around visiting and staff. I value my personal time very much, but my approach has been to try and listen to your questions are and to follow through and try and make sense of them. To question you further when the sessions are over and to try and understand where you're coming from.

Again, I have an open door policy and I think members know that I'm a phone call away. Mr. Netser mentioned that he didn't talk to me at that time, but most times when I am not here I am in Gjoa Haven. That's the approach that I try and take, whether it is in the House or through the standing committee.

I take every concern and commitment that I make to you seriously and I would like to try and follow through commitments I've made in the last Session is what I have been working on in the last couple months. So I'll leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. (interpretation) Thank you very much, Mr. Tootoo, for asking your questions. At this time I would like to inform the members that we'd like to keep your questions direct and to the point. Mr. Alagalak may start.

Mr. Alagalak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Aglukkaq. It seems like we're listening to the same concerns that were voiced last year. Usually one of the main concerns that we had, has been in regard to the nurses that were recruited from overseas. There was some conflict arising between the nurses who have been here for a long time and the nurses that were recruited from overseas. Even though these overseas nurses were new their salary levels were right up there with the long time nurses. That created a conflict.

These long time nurses have known the people for a while and they're professional. It seemed like it was a downer when these new nurses came and they were making more money than the long time nurses.

Have you done anything about this situation? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Alagalak. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Since the last session around recruitment, one of the things that I had selected my officials to do was to focus more on their efforts towards recruiting Canadian nurses in Canada as well as in Nunavut.

You will probably notice the newspapers the last couple of months that there are a number of ads saved for nurses that there is communities throughout the north. The issue, I think there is a difference here; there is an agency that we go to fill nurses.

My overall thought on that is to try and recruit indeterminate staff for those positions in the community. Agency nurses are there to provide short-term relief and yet they are sometimes paid differently than the staff that we have on stream.

My goal is to concentrate on recruiting indeterminate nurses through the recruitment process. The other area that I want my staff to look into further is the efforts around international recruitment. I have asked my staff to evaluate how we have done this and where we are at before we precede any further in that.

I feel that that effort is a very costly way to fill positions in the north and have directed my officials to concentrate on recruitment efforts within Canada and to evaluate the international recruitment process.

At this point in time, we are not proceeding with that until such time and evaluation is completed. So in response to the member's concern, those are the three initiatives underway to address some of the concerns that the member has raised. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Alagalak.

Mr. Alagalak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Going on to another subject: last year, I started bringing up the issue of the larger communities that have a lot of problems.

The local Inuit do not know whom to turn to when it comes to voicing their concerns. I indicated that there has to be a group that would do counseling for couples or for people who have drug problems or other social problems.

The social service workers have been taught and trained to do counseling, but there has been many comments made in the House saying that these social service workers are not approachable or the people were reluctant to approach these workers when it comes to being counseled for their problems.

These people do not have any work nor are they contracted, but there are individuals out there who can do counseling and who the people are comfortable with. You stated that you were going to do something about it, but I do not see anything happening in my community.

There does not seem to be any change. You stated that these local counselors were going to be giving papers or some kind of recommendations so that they can be paid and work as counselors. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Alagalak. Ms. Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The issue around counselors and alcohol and drug counselors at the community level, I did commit to the member and this House that we need to examine that type of service that is being provided at the community level. One of the challenges that we're faced with is to examine what is the most useful way, or the most beneficial way to provide this service at the community level.

In the past, we've had treatment facilities and people said it didn't work. To address that, positions were allocated to every community; some through social services, some through the municipalities, but the area where I'm not convinced is that I don't know if that's the best way to provide that service at this point in time.

I committed to this House that I want to examine that, and I think that's another area that is a need in the north. In the last two months, in this budget, that was one of the priorities that we identified for Nunavut.

I want to be able to speak to the services providers in that and see where we can make improvements in that area. The Department of Health has a lot of challenges before it and the issue is to keep our resources focused to where it's most needed and I think this is one of those areas.

As it is right now, the staff has been instructed to start the examination of that. It's been two months since our budget for that process was allocated. So I'm hoping that I will be able to report back on our findings around that.

On a broader scale, one of the things that I've committed to doing, and I think one that is really important for Nunavut, is to develop a Public Health Strategy for Nunavut. As it is right now, we have no strategies in place, or initiatives working in partnership with communities in keeping people healthy.

We have programs in place in treating people when they get sick, but we have no Nunavut-wide plan in place to keep people healthy. I think this is one of those initiatives that will have a very good positive impact in Nunavut, but it will take time to see some of those results like I said.

There is no quick fix to the challenges that we face in the north, but I think the challenge I face right now is to focus the resources that we need to start looking at coming up with a Nunavut-wide plan around keeping people healthy and that would be through the Public Health Strategy initiative that is under way within the department, and cases like the member's concern will come out of that also, amongst many other things that we face in the north. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. Mr. Alagalak.

Mr. Alagalak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's becoming evident. For example, our Premier has set up a Justice Committee that would deal with the summary convictions.

Since this seems to be on the same line of things, I think it's important to set up the liaison committee that would work at the community level, not only in my community but also in the Nunavut communities in general.

Since this seems to be around the same lines, it would be very beneficial to have a liaison committee or a committee of some sort that would lobby on behalf of the people that the people find approachable.

We have to look at the communication between the community leaders, the people, and the government. We have to look at how we can talk to the elders about *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*, about proper family care and so on. Is that part of the programs that you would like to see in your department? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Alagalak. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the things I did earlier on in this portfolio is that I met with every chairperson of the health committees in Nunavut. I met with the ones in Baffin, Kivalliq, as well as Kitikmeot; and I wanted hear firsthand from the committees what the priorities were for their communities and what we can do as the Department of Health in supporting their initiatives.

My view is that if we are going to look at keeping people healthy or working to assist communities address some of their priorities around health is to question ourselves, "How are we plugged into the community in getting the feedback we need in order to direct our resources to where it's most needed?"

Through those discussions with the committees, I learned very quickly that some of them are very advanced, more than others and I will use Arviat as an example. Their community is very active in identifying priorities and challenges in health issues and risks that they want to work on. The other community that's very active is Cambridge Bay. I wanted to look at how we could use what resources we have to have similar entities in every community so that communities are identifying what their needs are, what their fears are, and their challenges.

So through that process, I've looked at examining their terms of reference with all their feedback and that's still in the work, but also there is a need to consult every community to develop a Public Health Strategy and through that process, I think we'll come up with a Nunavut-wide plan that involves communities in identifying what some of the solutions are around keeping people healthy.

Through this main estimates process that's one that I identified as a priority in the business plan and one that I think is long overdue in the north and I hoping, through that

process, we'll be able to have a Nunavut-wide plan that identifies what the priorities are of health or social services and so on.

So that process is starting and I'm taking a Nunavut-wide approach and all communities, I would like to have their feedback on all that. So it will be starting around that umbrella of a Nunavut-wide Public Health Strategy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Alagalak.

Mr. Alagalak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have another question on another issue.

I would also like to show the House that these same people are put there to counsel the people be it a family affair, or addiction, or something. Usually, the people look for somebody that they can trust when they need counseling, but the problem is these people are there to do counseling, they follow the policies that they are required to follow, and these are the ones that were put in there and they break rules not intentionally, they are meant to keep families together, but through their policies, they take the family apart.

For example, if a child is taken by social services or if the man is thrown out of the house, then there's breakage and it seems like they're just thrown out and told not to return to his household. Again, it is the same people who look at family units, but they break them apart and they are not using *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*. They have to follow the policies that were set up by the department.

I think that this is intensive and you have to review this very carefully. Once again, if you are going to be doing a review, or are you making any plans any time soon on this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Alagalak. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some of the initiatives that kind of fall into what Mr. Alagalak is saying are around the functions of social workers as well as child welfare files, and violence against women. So they are all somewhat a bit intertwined.

Not every case is the same, and so some other challenges and concerns have been identified through the *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* Symposium that was held in January in partnership of the Qulliq Status of Women Council and the Department of Justice and various committees.

I just received a copy of their report last week where there are about seventy to seventy-five recommendations that arrived from that consultation that took place in January where over 100 people participated.

Men and women were putting forth their recommendations in trying to address some of the issues around the conflicts between couples and children. I am hoping that will help us in shaping the direction we need to go.

At the same time, I have also heard from my staff, from social workers, that they feel that they are stretched to a maximum. I have asked my staff to look to at their functions, the work that they do to start addressing the whole issue around what we are providing, but ultimately at the end of the day, I would like to see the people that are providing service to Nunavummiut are providing quality service and what those cases are would be depending on scenario.

So I am open to that and have started some process in partnership as many agencies and it will involve not just one department, but various other agencies, municipalities, wellness centres, Department of Justice, and so on. Yes, we are open to that and I think we are on the same path on trying to address some of those concerns. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Interpretation): Thank you, Madam Minister. We will move on to another member, Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome the Minister to the witness table. My first question to the minister concerns the Closer to Home Strategy. As members will recall that is something that the Department of Health was consulting hamlets and organizations across Nunavut on it during the summer and fall of 2004.

The strategy holds great promise to us in Nunavut in a couple of the areas. It provided a strategy to help us provide better treatment at health stations in Nunavut. Also, it would help us save money that we could use to fund other health initiatives.

So my question for the minister; if she could comment on what difficulty she has seen in Department of Health's efforts to implement that strategy over the last year and a half, and what the status is of the recommendations to go forward. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Around the idea of Closer to Home, I think the challenges are; within our territory there are a lot of pressures and challenges that we face on a regular basis in providing services to what we are currently doing.

My concern in the concept to be aware going into the Closer to Home concept of where we are right now in providing the services that we do have at home. In some cases we are doing well, in some cases we are not doing so well.

My concern is that I would like to try and balance the energy and resources to first of all addressing and fixing what we're not doing well in Nunavut, whether that be around training, or around keeping up to the facilities that we provide contracts for training in

that area, funding, and ensuring that there are adequate programs and services in place and that standards that are being met.

So, I'm taking that approach very cautiously in that I think we need to focus on in addressing our base before taking on anymore. At the same time, around Closer to Home, I think there is this idea that we're going to be repatriating all these services for Nunavummiut.

I don't see the Closer to Home concept as being a repatriating services initiative, but rather, if a person can get care in Cambridge Bay, then that's closer to home. With the opening of the hospitals, the previous government, and this government, the initiative was to open those new facilities in Cambridge Bay, and Rankin Inlet, as well as here.

There services that will be offered there will also be services that offer services in Cambridge Bay versus Edmonton, or Yellowknife, or Winnipeg, and so on. So that's one piece. The other area is the announcement of the government to open the two facilities; one in Igloolik, and one in Gjoa Haven. So those are again, initiatives that way.

The challenge will be to manage all that as well as the pressures that we're under in services, and my job through my staff and my colleagues is to ensure that the initiatives of this government are geared where it's most needed.

And I think it's a tough balancing act when we have limited resources and staff to do all the things that are before us. So it's an excellent initiative I think, but I think we have to go back and also evaluate where we are and how we're doing, and can we take on anything more. So I don't want to start a process and not do well.

I think what I've said to my staff is let's start the process in a very cautious way before we take it on because some services are better provided by other jurisdictions and so on. So those are the challenges and the challenge of, I guess, balancing our initiatives. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that reply.

We often think that the Department of Health is single handedly responsible for the health of Nunavummiut. When you come to the Government of Nunavut, I happen to think that many departments are responsible, for a number of reasons.

We often hear about overcrowding in housing. We hear that the lack of a good education holds people back. They end up on income support. They can't afford food. There are few jobs in communities, and people can't find work, that sort of thing. There are many, many reasons in my mind. I heeded a comment that you made to my colleague, Mr. Alagalak, "We're keeping people healthy."

I would like to ask you about your comments on the type of support and input that you get from your fellow Cabinet colleagues in terms of working together as all departments in the Cabinet level to keep people healthy in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the member is absolutely correct and I share his views in that keeping people healthy is not one department's or one person's responsibility; actually it is, as an individual we make a choice whether we want to be healthy or not; to lead healthy lifestyles, exercise, eat healthy, don't smoke, and so on.

I also believe that communities have a role in keeping their communities healthy. I would like to try and answer that question in several sense, because I think through my discussions with the Chairs of the committees it became very evident to me that very quickly they were talking solutions in addressing the concerns in their communities; whether it be the delivery of counselling; whether it be on the land training program, or so on; or cultural program. There's a lot of interest in that.

I think the role I see us playing is to tap into that kind of ownership of the solutions at the community level, through the Public Health Strategy initiative of this government that we would like to initiate the process of consultations of communities. That Public Health Strategy will involve many individuals, agencies, organizations, and departments; housing being one; education being one; the justice system is being one; and so on.

Through that the government is committed to my colleagues to initiative to engage Nunavummiut to come up with that strategy. I think we all recognize that housing is a major challenge. The government has also committed, as I mentioned earlier, to start talking to people on Violence Against Women, *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq*, I think that initiative that keeps people healthy, and so on.

There are cases out there that are in process and have been going on a lot longer than the time that I have been here, but I don't think we've ever described it as keeping people healthy, but there are initiatives that are there around housing, overcrowding, education, preventing violence, the tobacco cessation initiative.

There are a number of initiatives so through the Public Health Strategy perhaps that will become the avenue to assess how we're doing in those initiatives. I hope I answered the member's question. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Aglukkaq. Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that answer. It's good to see that there are a lot of people working on that and not just relying on the Department of Health to improve health for Nunavummiut.

I have asked this question with other ministers about the relationship of the Government of Nunavut to the federal government. I know as the Minister of Health you often have to attend federal, provincial, and territorial ministers meetings and discuss the health issues with your provincial/federal counterparts. I know that the federal government is the government with most of the funding that's available for health initiatives across Canada. You quite often have to compete with your provincial and territorial colleagues to share that pot.

So I think relationships are important with the federal government, as I mentioned before, regardless of which parties are in power. With that in mind, I would like ask you what your style is in dealing with your federal and provincial counterparts in terms of making them aware that we have serious health issues in Nunavut, and need their support to prove our delivery of health services and programs to Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I answer that, I think I'm just going to set this straight.

With the Department of Health there are a number of files on a federal, provincial, and territorial level and some overlap between education as well, but I find the energy that we spend in educating our counterparts on the challenges we face in Nunavut to be very beneficial.

For example, the policies of the federal government around aboriginal people, on and off reserve, child care was mentioned by Mr. Picco earlier today, but there are so many things that I think are beneficial in that we are unique in that of our environment, the communities, the cost of living, but the relationships I have with my counterparts I think is one that there is recognition of the challenges we face in Nunavut around health care.

The government, in fact has been very successful in acquiring additional funding through the Premier for medical travel, as an example, and I think that was recognition of the federal government at the time of the challenges we face. There were some increases around Non-Insured Health Benefit programs.

In other funds, the FPTs around raising the issue from the Status of Women Council that involved work and leadership of also other jurisdictions is to raise the issue around violence against aboriginal women on and off reserve.

That was one that was raised by Former Ministers of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth, and it took a long time to get where we are, and it's now a national issue that is being addressed.

So it starts there, and I think the challenge again that we face is to continually have an open relationship with our federal colleagues, as well as the...the new minister, I just met him through the pandemic FPT in Toronto.

So it's only been those meetings that I've had a conversation with, but I always find useful to also share what we're up against with other colleagues. Just as an example, the social services minister in Alberta will be coming to Nunavut as a need on aboriginal files that the FPT tabled just to learn more about the difference of Nunavut Inuit and First Nations groups, and policies, and challenges.

So I hope that answers the question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, minister. Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that information. I think we would be foolish to think that it doesn't take a lot of work to educate people at the federal and provincial levels.

I recall doing a lot of that myself when I was mayor, and President of Nunavut Association of Municipalities. There are a great number of people in Ottawa who didn't seem to know about Nunavut.

We even took the mayors of Nunavut down there to raise awareness one year. Mr. Chairman, my next question for the minister concerns the internal work in her department. I know it's important that we put ministers in their departments who know what's going on in their departments.

I know that staff prepare a lot of information for the ministers to review, but with that in mind, I wonder if the minister could tell us how she keeps track of what her department is doing and maybe give an idea of how many hours per week she spends reviewing information, briefing notes, reports, or being updated on current issues. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Minister Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Depending on the issue, I mean there's no way if I keep track, I mean we have a system where we deal with correspondence, logging, and following through those regularly, but I think the key to this portfolio, it is a huge portfolio, it requires almost daily contact with officials within the department, and to think things through to have conversations, I find that very useful in doing this job.

I think it's important to have good dialogues where we can discuss the issues and be open about that. I welcome feedback on issues because I find the best solutions come out of good dialogues with groups or individuals. I don't necessarily wait for a briefing note to

discuss an issue, but I do spend time reviewing information from previous and updating where we are at regularly.

At the same time, we have a business plan that we approved in this House on April 1 and that defines the priorities of this government for the next 12 months. There's a process in that where we are keeping track as to how we are starting those initiatives and timelines around that, but daily contacts for the most part with the staff. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq. No further questions, Mr. Peterson? Thank you. (interpretation) I don't have anybody else on my list. Is there are any other member who wishes to pose questions to Ms. Aglukkaq?

Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq for appearing before us. Thank you. At this time, we will have a 10-minute break before we proceed. Thank you.

>> *Meeting recessed at 16:18 and resumed at 16:36*

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you for coming back. Colleagues, we concluded with Ms. Aglukkaq and I would like to ask Mr. Tapardjuk to go to the witness table. He can read his opening remarks once he's there for not more than ten minutes. Minister Tapardjuk, you can proceed to go to the witness table.

Thank you. Minister Tapardjuk you have up ten minutes to read your opening remarks if you have any. Thank you.

Opening Remarks by Minister Tapardjuk

Hon. Louis Tapardjuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, Members of the Legislative Assembly. I am pleased to be here during this Nunavut Leadership Forum. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to reflect on leadership in general and on my own leadership especially.

Since Premier Okalik assigned me the portfolios of overseeing the Department of Human Resources and the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth we have achieved considerable progress towards our *Pinasuaqtavut* objectives.

Colleagues, as many of you know over the years I have passionately worked to promote and protect Inuit culture and values. It is through these values that I have incorporated and encouraged departments to use Inuit societal values as the foundation for any program delivery. This has been reinforced by the ongoing work and consultations with the *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Katimajit*.

The Department of Human Resources has demonstrated its commitment to fulfilling *Article 23* objectives under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. We have increased Inuit representation in the Government of Nunavut through the continuing implementation of the Inuit Employment Plan. We have also worked with all departments

to update their initiatives for inclusion in their business plans. In addition to the quarterly monitoring of progress this will increase the accountability of our department to the Legislature for meeting IEP targets.

Since the beginning of the Second Assembly we have extended the priority hiring policy for an additional four years. We have expanded the Summer Student Employment Equity Program. We have reviewed more than 2,900 job descriptions, which has reduced barriers to employment caused by inflated job requirements.

Since March 2004 we have added an additional 291 Inuit beneficiaries to the public service, increasing Inuit employment to 48 percent. To create a more respectful workplace we are implementing a workplace harassment policy and will be providing implementation to Government of Nunavut staff.

The success of the Inuit Employment Plan requires substantive commitment to training. In spite of cost constraints we have developed and enhanced a variety of training and development programs. During the last two years training programs included 1,486 employees. Participation of beneficiaries has increased to 55 percent.

In conjunction with CLEY a cultural orientation program was designed and launched in 2006. The *Sivuliqtiksaq* Internship Program has graduated seven interns to date and currently supports 14 positions.

The Inuktitut Language Program is being developed to better meet the needs of GN employees and to meet the goal of making Inuktitut the working language of government by 2020. Our goal is to address ongoing challenges to effective program delivery.

With respect to the future priorities revision of the *Public Service Act* is well underway. The revised Act will reflect current Nunavut priorities and will position Nunavut for the effective management of employees for the future. Following preliminary consultations broad consultations on the proposed changes will follow with the view to tabling the bill in the fall of 2007.

We collaborated with the Department of Finance to successfully negotiate the Collective Agreement with the Nunavut Employees Union and the Federation of Nunavut Teachers. A major objective of Human Resources will be to negotiate a successful agreement in 2006-07.

I am sure you would agree that the mandate of CLEY is close to the hearts of many Nunavummiut, who would like to see a strong cultural foundation with a strong language base for the population, including both youth and elders.

CLEY, in collaboration with NTI and IHT, has demonstrated its commitment to the preservation of Nunavut cultural legacy by committing \$10 million in the Capital Plan for 2006-07 for the Nunavut Heritage Centre. I think it is important to emphasize the need for Inuit to take back control and ownership of their lives.

Elders are eager to pass on their knowledge of proper behavior to the coming generations. My hope is for the two communities to succeed with the Inuit Societal Values Project so that we may expand to other communities.

My goal is to focus on prevention instead of reaction to unwanted behaviors. Each community has been given the opportunity to present a proposal outlining why their community is the best candidate for the location of *Piqqusilirivik*. It is my goal to announce the outcome this month leading to the establishment of the Nunavut Cultural School, *Piqqusilirivik*.

Consultations for the *Official Languages Act* and the *Inuit Language Protection Act* will take place soon. The development of these pieces of legislation is very important to ensuring the long term health of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun in Nunavut.

Culture, Language, Elders and Youth makes an important contribution to the lives of Nunavummiut by providing opportunities to preserve and enhance language, culture, heritage, and to promote healthy active living through our grants and contributions programs to various non-profit organizations, and individuals.

In closing, I thank you for this opportunity to outline some of the accomplishments under my leadership. I will continue to respond to your questions and concerns in a timely manner and encourage you to approach me with your concerns.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time, and would appreciate any comments or guidance you think would help me improve in my own leadership capacity. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Tapardjuk. Very good timing. I will now open the floor for general comments. Mr. Curley.

Members' Replies to Minister Tapardjuk's Opening Remarks

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister for making an appearance. I'm sure that there are a lot of people who are interested in what you have been doing on the departments that you are responsible for.

I would like to thank your officials in the Department of Human Resources who have been working extremely hard to put up the numbers, and we do see them when we're holding our standing committees.

In Rankin Inlet, we worked extremely hard when they were dealing with employees in our region. And of course, some of the applicants weren't informed of whether they got the jobs or not.

But I would like to congratulate you for having an all Inuit team in the Department of Human Resources. And I'm sure that it's going to make it easier for the people out there to communicate with your officials.

I'm a little bit concerned about the Inuktitut language. I know that there would be enough, but I think that if we're going to implement it, we'll have to include the hamlets and the private organizations also.

The Inuktitut language is deteriorating very fast and it is not the working language of the Government of Nunavut. I know that you're working extremely hard, but we are concerned as regular members about the Inuktitut language.

I'll be asking questions at the appropriate time.

I would like to ask the members here that there are only 25 citizen towns now, including Rankin Inlet, which is the only community north of 60 that has applied. I would like to ask all of you to support Rankin Inlet or Nunavut. The number is 1-888-459-2006. Call them by phone.

I would like you to support Nunavut and it is going to be something that the young people will be looking for. If you did not cast your vote, please go ahead and urging the people who are listening to call 1-888-459-2006. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. I made my selection already. I have no other names on my list. Last call for making general comments to the minister's opening comments.

Thank you. I would like to remind the members and I will also be telling you how many questions you can ask. I am opening up the floor now for questions. Mr. Curley.

Questions to Minister Tapardjuk

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When you became the minister, we were extremely proud because you are working extremely hard to make sure that the Inuit language and culture is utilized within the government, and nobody ever questioned your actions and you have always spoken in Inuktitut in the true Inuit fashion.

There are some of us who speak in Inuktitut, but then again they are not fully understood by the people out there because of the structured system that we use. We are very proud of our dialect and one of the ministers, Leona's dialect is different, but it is something that we are very proud to hear.

It is a gift that was given to each individual one of us, and with that some of us were concerned about whether you were going to keep working on this. As some of us were informed, are you going to be working harder to work on the concerns with the mandate that has been given to you? Could you, as a minister, indicate to us if you are going to

work on this harder, as of course as a minister you are accountable to the House. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. You have 11 more questions. You can ask them to the remaining ministers. Mr. Tapardjuk.

Hon. Louis Tapardjuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for posing that question. Yes, it is very true. I did not just start now, but we have numerous challenges that have been coming across and I do recognize that fact.

I am very open to any suggestions as I am an elected member and I knew that when I was elected I had to make an improvement personally also. Looking at the cultural side and the problems that are faced, and I am not sure which member will be taking over for the whole month of July, but somebody will be there while I am on leave. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Curley.

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

We support you fully, and as I stated earlier, we know that you are working extremely hard, and there are people out there who would like to see you more visible at the community level.

There are people out there who are very interested in your portfolio, and what you're doing on the culture and language side. Some of the elders have been telling me that they have not had any responses to the recommendations or to the meetings that they had held.

So I would strongly suggest that you go to the communities to have a meeting with the elders and other interested parties. Is it possible for you to do so? Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. Mr. Tapardjuk.

Hon. Louis Tapardjuk (interpretation): I don't know how many communities I've gone to, and I've had meetings with elders and youth in particular.

But with the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth, there are elders' councils, but if you're not invited, I don't know if it's going to create a problem if I just show up or invite myself to their function because I'm a little intimidated by the elders.

There might be a case where I go to a community and request to have a meeting with the elders, and they might turn me down. I think it would be more appropriate if they invite me to go to their meetings, or to their functions, or any one of my staff can go to the communities.

If there is a request, I'd be more than pleased to attend. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Tapardjuk. Thank you, Mr. Curley. I have no other names on my list. It's my last call if you have any questions to the minister. Thank you. Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for appearing before us at the witness table.

Before I begin, I would like to thank the minister for coming to Cambridge Bay to meet with the elders. They were very happy to have you come. I would also like to thank you for the great support you've shown to my community over the years with funding through Culture, Language, Elders and Youth, for youth and heritage projects.

I hear a lot of good feedback from our community in that regard. With that in mind, Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister, at the ministerial and Cabinet level, the departments have to compete among themselves for the government's scarce financial resources.

Do you think with all the huge demands from the 25 communities in Nunavut that your department's budget is adequate for all your responsibilities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Mr. Tapardjuk.

Hon. Louis Tapardjuk (interpretation): We don't have enough resources. For example, if we focus on languages, we get \$1.1 million from the federal government to be used for the Inuktitut languages in Nunavut.

Also, for the French language, I believe we get \$1.75 million. What I'm trying to say is that the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth, if they have more money for languages, and if the government could pay for services, for example, interpreters, translators, policies and regulations to be translated, so that they will be more accessible to the people, then, it would be more adequate.

But these come from the federal government. If the federal government can provide money for language services, then the monies that are allocated to our department could be used for other activities, for example, housing and so on.

Yes, our budget is inadequate and under northern sports the Community and Government Services. We worked with Community and Government Services and we do not know exactly how old the recreation activities are, which communities need to be replaced, and so on.

So we have to find out exactly where the recreational services are, what is required, what is needed. Then, after we get all the information, we will have a meeting with the federal government and with the Conservatives. They say that they need the information prior to setting aside some funds. So this is what we're going to be doing.

For the information of the members, what and when we're responsible for cultural programs, we want to know what we can do. The federal government becomes responsible once an individual breaches the law, but for healing and so on, what can we do to counsel families and also elders' abuse.

How can we protect the elders from abuse? We will have to recognize all those and if we had more money, possibly what we could do is add two or three more communities to find out how the Nunavummiut can become responsible and take ownership of those types of programs and the problem usually is that we are dealing with a culture that is not ours and which is falling to us. So those are the things that I would like to do if we had adequate resources. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Tapardjuk. Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that response. It is good information.

This next question can apply to the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth or Human resources. It is a general question, but I would like to ask you what you think your three or four most important accomplishments have been since taking your office as a minister in 2004. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Minister Tapardjuk.

Hon. Louis Tapardjuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like you to rephrase your question please.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Tapardjuk. Mr. Peterson, if you can clarify that same question. Thank you.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for asking me to clarify it. You are the Minister responsible for Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth and also Human Resources.

So my question to you is: what have been your three most important accomplishments since taking office as minister in 2004? It could be for Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth or Human Resources, or a combination of the two departments. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Mr. Tapardjuk.

Hon. Louis Tapardjuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is a very good question and I am not sure how I am going to respond to it.

First of all, I would like you to know that in the first government started *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* would be the foundation of the government, which is perfectly fine, but then again non-Inuit in particular.

What are we talking about when we are talking about Inuit culture? Are we talking about the traditional culture or today's culture? In order to make it clear, and as I stated in my openings, and under the Human Resources and Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth, we would like the foundation following the Inuit societal values. It had the *Qallunaat* foundation but we'd like to do is adopt Inuit societal values that are good. When it's written like that Inuit societal values were being followed, but again the Inuit traditional values will be integrated into the programs and services, and actions, and so on.

Once it's clarified we're looking at two communities that we're using as pilot projects. I think that the people of Nunavut will take on the ownership, as of course the Nunavut Government is theirs. Their perspective now is that you are the government and we're on the other side. So it's you and me right now. We have to know that the government is ours and we're the ones who are going to be operating it.

Again along the same line and under the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth we now have a unilingual Inuk, who is working in our department as an advisor on Inuit societal values. We also have an employee who hasn't completed his high schooling but this is being used as a pilot project in Cambridge Bay, and an elder is responsible. So we're looking at putting in more and more elders in our department.

Under the Department of Human Resources I will identify two issues. The priorities that should be identified when we have a classified ad out, or an employment opportunity, there has been an addition, which makes it more people friendly and gives us more strength.

We are trying to implement everything, and of course, we get opposition from the people out there but we are looking at implementing every year for the next four years. In regard to the heritage centre and the Inuktitut school, those have been in the works now and I think, and I don't know about everybody else but those are my ideas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Tapardjuk. And also I would like to thank Mr. Peterson for your questions. I have no more further names on my list for questions to Mr. Tapardjuk. Are there any further questions for Minister Tapardjuk? There are none. Thank you, Minister Tapardjuk for appearing before us. You may leave the witness table, Mr. Tapardjuk. Thank you.

We will continue. At this time I would like to Minister Akasuk if he could go to the witness table. Mr. Akasuk. You're allowed to do your opening comments for 10 minutes, and you may start your statement now.

Opening Remarks by Minister Akesuk

Hon. Olayuk Akesuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for allowing me to appear before the members. I would like to talk about the issues that...

(interpretation ends) I would like to start by thanking you because you are the voice of Nunavummiut. Over the years you have written to me expressing your ideas, suggestions for improvement, and concerns of our constituents.

Informally you have expressed your own priorities. I assure you that all of our comments are taken seriously. Public Housing is one of these priorities. Many of you have expressed your community's needs for housing.

I know that the lack of housing affects the quality of life, education achievement, and health of Nunavummiut. For that reason, early after I received the housing corporation portfolio I made a point of lobbying the federal government Minister of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for a commitment to Nunavut to housing in Nunavut.

I collaboratively worked with Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and several of my Cabinet colleagues to address the housing issue.

(interpretation) All of this has worked. We would like to thank the federal government for providing \$200 million for the three years, and I know that this is going to be beneficial to Nunavummiut.

Perhaps this will be able to build 700 units. Some of the funding will be used to renovate old units and build new units. Some will be single family units. Once the funding was announced, I asked NHC to order materials and in the upcoming year we tried to utilize the funding so we can start constructing units. All the communities will receive materials to build five-plex units, except four communities, Grise Fiord, Whale Cove, Chesterfield Inlet, and Repulse Bay, they'll build duplexes.

For the Homeownership Program, we want to work further on this issue and we would like to increase the funding for Material Assistance Program. We would like to provide long-term benefits in these kinds of services in order for the employment. The Housing Corporation is now starting to work with the Department of Economic Development and Community and Government Services to make sure that we use this funding for Training.

I know that this \$200 million cannot construct all units that we require in Nunavut, but I will work with the federal government and the ten-year Inuit Housing Action Plan which would cost another \$1.7 million. I envision the \$200 million as the beginning that we can initiate now, and to make sure it continues through.

And also, July 9, 2005, Nunavut's *Wildlife Act* was brought into force. It's one of the most important Acts that I've dealt with and it's going to benefit all Nunavummiut. I was very pleased to work on that issue.

Also, I'm very pleased to have worked with Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and we worked on this *Wildlife Act* for three years with the Nunavummiut fully participating. The Nunavut Land Claims provisions have been acknowledged in that Act.

(interpretation ends) As my third major achievement I would like to describe the recently announced allocation of 2,500 metric tonnes of turbot to Nunavut. Like the housing funding that I described earlier, securing an increase of our turbot quota took years of work.

As the first step in gaining more control over our fisheries' resources, I have led the Department of Environment in completing the Fisheries' Strategy, which sets the direction of successful development of our inshore and offshore fisheries' resources. It focuses on accessing more quotas and investing in infrastructure training and science.

As another step in 2005, the Department of Environment internally funded a project to identify turbot resource in Area 0A. We found that the quantity of turbot was much higher than previously suspected. This led to a quota increase of 2,500 millitonnes for Canada to be allocated by the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. For years I have lobbied this minister for our adjacent resources. In March, 100 percent of increases were allocated to Nunavut. This represents \$1 million in royalties to Nunavut, or \$10 million in landed fish each year.

Also in fisheries, in collaboration with the Federal Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, the Nunavut Arctic College, the Baffin Fisheries Coalition, and the Marine Institute the GN created the Nunavut Fisheries Training Consortium, which provides training for beneficiaries in fisheries. Since the consortium's creation two years ago, 73 students have taken the course and 77 percent of these have graduated. Most importantly, the students are offered real careers upon graduation.

In my last month as the Minister of Environment, I led the process of reviewing the Harvesters' Support Program. I felt improvement to the programs needed to be made in respect of Nunavummiut. And for the GN and NTI to better serve Nunavummiut with our limited funds.

(interpretation) And so, I led an increase from \$4,500 to \$10,000 with the Disaster Compensation Program.

The smaller communities have been requesting to get additional program services. We had created a \$5 million fund for the smaller communities. This includes funds for the non-decentralized communities of \$100,000. Plus \$3.6 million will be made available to the smaller communities including not-for-profit organizations or societies. The intent of the funding proposals must be to benefit the communities that are non-decentralized.

As for priorities, such as the Manitoba-Bathurst Port and Road Project, we will be in support of those. And also, if we are going to build a deep sea port, we will be in support with the deep sea port being built in the Baffin region.

So those are some of the issues that we've been developing within the Department of Economic Development.

The Mining Strategy will be completed as soon as possible and there will also be implementation plan to go with them. We will work very hard to accomplish those.

We will also work with the federal government on offshore fisheries, shrimp fisheries, and turbot fisheries. I will work hard with my federal counterparts while I hold this portfolio in the upcoming years. I also want to work very closely with the members as I hold the portfolio for the Nunavut Housing Corporation and Economic Development and Transportation. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Akesuk and also most people would probably be just going home. I think it's time to welcome a group of visitors to the Gallery, welcome visitors.

>> *Applause*

To remind the members if they would like, like I said, and not exceed three minutes to response to the minister. Do any regular members wish to make a statement? Mr. Curley.

Members' Replies to Minister Akesuk's Opening Remarks

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and also I would like to welcome Minister Akesuk. We all know that you work very hard on behalf on Nunavummiut and I know the government. As a Minister holding this portfolio, we are all in support of you.

First of all, I know that this issue is very challenging to develop our businesses and we can provide economic development to the communities. It all starts from the carvers at the community level and from carvers and also to mining sectors all the way up to oil exploration.

The concern about the economy developing and building the economy in the smaller communities: we need to be more active in the economic development activities in the smaller communities, although we have strategies. I am requesting that you look into inland fishery even though it's small, but offshore fishery is developing in the Baffin region for shrimp and turbot. Ground fisheries are developing, but for inland fisheries, for those of us who live on the mainland, we need to develop the commercial inland fisheries rather than just waiting for someone to be interested.

The government should be leading and encouraging them and we do not have any fish plants outside of Whale Cove. Caribou meat plants and fish plants have to be separated. I

am urging the minister to start working on inland fisheries and when I met with the elders, the elders have stated that we need to develop the inland fisheries more and I believe there needs to be a strategy.

I think we need a strategy even though we have a quota, but I am sure that all of them do not necessarily have to be full. I am sure it could be done that way because the fishing lakes are quite far from each other on the inland.

I believe that you should look into this further and I will be asking questions in regard to housing. Have you looked into how we can cut costs on constructing housing? I only have two minutes left, so I will conclude with that for now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for appearing before us as witness. I guess we are saving the best for last.

I would like to tell the minister, I think he has two of the most important departments in the government for the constituents in my riding. The Nunavut Housing Corporation is a Crown Agency that is very important to my riding and most ridings in Nunavut. In particular the Department of Economic Development and Transportation is very important to us because we all know that the Kitikmeot is on the verge of an economic boom in the coming years.

We stated in 2004 that economic development would be a priority for Nunavut and that the Kitikmeot would probably one of the leading regions in terms of developing our potential. We do have a lot of potential there. We have recently opened a mine and we're close to opening another mine in probably a year or two from now; a lot of mineral development.

We're seeking support to develop our Bathurst Inlet Road and Port Project. I know the Kivalliq region also has an infrastructure project that they want a lot of government support for. This is infrastructure that supports mineral development or community development so that your department is very important in that regard.

I know in my riding, and I've questioned you on this a few times that developing our airport and bringing it up to standard that will support better aircraft and improve safety for the traveling public. I'll be possibly asking questions on that.

Getting back to the Nunavut Housing Corporation, I know it is expensive to build houses so I was pleased to see that the Government of Canada is going to provide \$200 million to Nunavut to build some more housing. It is not enough as we all know. We've debated this; talked about it; lobbied about it for many years, not just in the last two years but it seems like forever. We have to keep that up.

In my riding in Cambridge Bay we do have a huge need for housing. People are seeking my help all the time for support to get housing. I hope that with this \$200 million, and additional funds that you get in the future, that there will be some immediate relief provided to my riding. I look forward to asking a few questions with regard to your policies in the Nunavut Housing Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. (interpretation) I don't have anybody else on my list. Any response to the minister's opening comments? There is none. Thank you.

While we're under Minister Akesuk, the floor is open for questions from the regular members and before you open questions we can indicate of how many you have left. I now open the floor for questions to the minister. I would like to ask if there is anybody who wishes to ask the minister. Mr. Peterson.

Questions to Minister Akesuk

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hope my tallying is correct. I think I have four questions remaining. I thought I would get them in here. I touch on my opening comments about the Bathurst Inlet Road and Port and the minister also mentioned it as well. I think we all agree that infrastructure to support economic development is important in Nunavut. I know that the minister and the government had done a lot of work in that regard. However, it's not all that evident to people in the Kitikmeot of what the government has done.

I've tried to explain how these things take time when you try to clarify to people what lobbying means. It could take anywhere from two years to twenty years, depending on the nature of the lobbying, and the turnover of ministers, and the senior officials in different levels of government.

With that in mind, I would like to ask the minister if he can give us an update on the Government of Nunavut's strategies with respect to lobbying at the federal level for support for infrastructure to support economic development, in particular if he could respond to the Bathurst Inlet Road and Port and the Kivalliq/Manitoba Road Project. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Minister Akesuk.

Hon. Olayuk Akesuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Maybe it's been about two or three weeks since I met with my federal counterpart, the Minister Transportation, and we discussed the Bathurst Road, and also the Manitoba Road.

We had a discussion on this and our staff. We have to work closely with the federal counterparts, with the staff at the federal level. I met with Minister Cannon at the federal level, and we started talks on these issues, and I am confident that we will be working together and that the federal/provincial meetings at that meeting, we will keep bringing this up at those meetings. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Akesuk. Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister. I'm glad to hear that there are some ongoing discussions lobbying at the federal level.

Staying on the theme of economic development, our standing committee asked the minister a few months ago about the work that the government is doing with respect to developing gas reserves in Nunavut, and in particular in the high arctic. It occurred to us that we talk about mining, we talk about other types of economic development, but we never talk about gas.

I recently read a report that there are certain gas companies that hold extensive reserves in Nunavut that aren't being developed. In fact these companies are selling their reserves to other companies for hundreds of millions of dollars for the rights.

So somebody is making money off of our gas reserves, and it's not Nunavut. It will probably be years before anyone does make money at the company level because they claim the issue is how to get the gas to market. That's the reason why they'll hold the reserves, but they won't develop it.

In the mean time, we can't benefit from it. One of my colleagues mentioned in the standing committee meeting that it could take five to 10 to 20 years to develop these reserves. Why aren't they doing it now?

My question for the minister: what is the Government of Nunavut doing to foster development of gas reserves in the high arctic now? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Minister Akesuk.

Hon. Olayuk Akesuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good question, Mr. Peterson.

(interpretation) At the meeting that I mentioned earlier, we talked a bit about this with Minister Cannon. There have been number of people who have the right to gas reserves.

I have asked my officials as to how we can work on this further, because there were so many people that did the studies and it is very difficult at this time, and I already told Minister Cannon and his staff as to how we can work closely on this so that it can create revenue instead of just letting it sit there, and with the fuel price increases.

I will work diligently on this and to be able to communicate with my federal counterparts because we see this as an opportunity to make some money for Nunavut, if we can create those jobs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Akesuk. 888-459. Mr. Peterson, do you have anything else?

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that number you call, you have to call it before midnight tonight as well to get your vote in or it doesn't count. I'm just helping out the good folks in Rankin Inlet. I already sent a note back to the Kitikmeot there to get them to make their phone calls.

I would like to ask the minister a question about the Housing Corporation portfolio that he holds. In my comments and in his comments, we talked about the \$200 million that the federal government is going to provide Nunavut to develop housing.

I'm not sure if it's possible to start building houses this year, but if it is possible to use that \$200 million, has the minister's department given any thought about how they would allocate housing through the various communities in Nunavut so that housing could be delivered on this year's annual sealift? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Peterson, just a reminder that you have one more question after that. Minister Akesuk.

Hon. Olayuk Akesuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We purchased an extra 100 units for this year's sealift. We are hoping to start building next summer or even next spring. Again, we want to make sure that we do this properly. Right now, the extra hundred units, we are trying to divide that equally amongst the communities in Nunavut.

Also, in the coming two years, we want to strategize to make sure that we respect the communities on a needs basis. And also, we will be doing a consultation with our staff to the communities of how we could deliver this better to make sure that we maximize from this \$200 million to improve our housing in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Akesuk. Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that answer. I hope that we can get some housing on this year's sealift for the different communities.

I wanted to ask the minister about the GN Staff Housing Policy. As the minister recalls, that policy was implemented in January of this year. There were a lot of concerns across Nunavut from some of the tenants about the increase in rent. I know we asked the minister and the Minister of Human Resources if that policy has had any impact on the Government of Nunavut staffing with respect to people deciding that it's too costly to come to Nunavut or even live in Nunavut because of the housing costs.

Having said that, there are a good number of people in Nunavut, Government of Nunavut staff who have chosen to reside in the houses for various reasons, the main reason is probably because they need a job and they are trying to make due with the rent they're paying.

My question for the minister: a lot of the houses are in substandard condition, but the way house rents have gone up substantially, as the Minister of the Housing Corporation, do you and your officials do you have plans to upgrade the houses so that the people are paying for good quality housing rather than substandard housing? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Peterson that is your last and final question. Minister Akesuk.

Hon. Olayuk Akesuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we are doing our very best to make sure that we have proper accommodations for our staff. It's important that we keep our houses or staff housing in a safe manner and healthy living.

Again, yes, we're going to do our very best to make sure that we renovate what has to be renovated. Again, we want to do inspections, to come up with ideas of how we could improve the old staff housing units, and learn from them, and build better staff housing units that could last longer than the staff housing units that we have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Akesuk. I have no other names on my list. I have no other names on my list. I apologize. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you. I would like to thank the minister for appearing in front of the committee. We don't have a lot of questions, but in regard to one of the questions that were brought up in regard to housing, and the lack of adequate housing for the people of Nunavut, I believe there has to be a study done.

The houses are way too expensive when you're building them, especially the costs that are born by the Nunavut Government. If we look at the average, we pay approximately \$250,000 to build a three-bedroom, or a two-bedroom, or if it's a multiplex.

The unit cost is at \$250,000 now and it's very obvious that if we're going to be building a two or three-bedroom house, and if an independent person ordered the parts, it's going to less than \$250,000.

With that, is it possible for you to direct the housing corporation to do cost analyses, and also to do an internal review on where they can reduce costs? The reason why I'm bringing this question up is if we're going to be looking at affordable housing, with today's cargo rates, it's very expensive because they are not containerized.

A prefab bought, and delivered, (interpretation ends) once it lands in the communities, it's 40 percent or more of the housing is related to costs. I believe we can do better. So I'm asking the minister: will you undertake to do an exercise of how to reduce the costs of building of public housing in Nunavut? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Curley. Minister Akesuk.

Hon. Olayuk Akesuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the member for asking those questions.

I know that it's very expensive to ship in materials to build houses here. For the next two years we are going to be looking at how we can build more housing with the \$200 million that we're going to be receiving and how we can reduce the costs of shipping the material.

With the \$200 million that will be used for housing, we're going to see where we can reduce costs so that we can order more. We will be doing that for the next two years. Thank you.

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

Mr. Curley: Yes, I thank the minister for undertaking. I'm speaking in English I want to be understood with the inter-related costs that the government has taken sort of a blind eye approach to the whole costs of shipping, whether it be the costs of goods, groceries or whatnot.

Particularly when it relates to government cover, this government is continuing a practice that the federal government adopted over 60 years ago.

The policy of the federal government was that we will subsidize a number of shipping companies out of Montreal and we will continue to give them those contracts whether they are the low bidder or not in this zone or that zone, they can only give them two contracts, or four a piece, so they all don't go bankrupt.

The government is paying more attention to the shipping companies, protecting them, so when they tender and release these tenders, they change a few things and in the end it costs more because there's no consideration for containing the rising shipment, nor is there a plan to open up the market like we do with the trucking companies.

We can now have an open, for instance, cheaper products if we open Iqaluit alone. Open Iqaluit. I am asking you; you tell me that you're not the Minister of Government Services; you guys at Cabinet work together, so is it possible that you do, someone, take the lead and say the costs of shipping the government subsidizes shipping companies with those tenders; with those contracts are really hurting the economy of Nunavut.

Why don't you undertake Cabinet and you propose it as the Minister of Transportation and say we can do better than that, and report back to us? We will not sneak in on the confidential report, but do a proper report so that Nunavummiut will see some sign that there is hope after all for a future. That was one question. Thank you.

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

Hon. Olayuk Akesuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are working on this through the Transportation Strategy and we can include it through the Transportation Strategy. We have made statements on where we can make improvements, and also where we can make reductions in the costs.

We asked them to do a review through the Transportation Strategy and then we would see how we could implement it. I could direct my staff to do so. Thank you.

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

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you. I think you just say yes to the Road and Port study and possibly to the Government Services. I have always been supportive of the Coast Guard and what they used to do with the Government of Nunavut. I think that we can learn from the Minister of Education that there has to be a fundamental shift and it's the same for transportation services.

(interpretation ends) Consultants that the government has hired for the strategy really are not involved in the transportation business; we're just also supporting, subsidizing consultants that are based in Nunavut. They really do not qualify to make any transportation issues as far as I'm concerned. That's my opinion. I think we can do a lot better by even engaging your officials and really dig hard with the other departments that we can actually find a way to propose alternative reduction of the cost of shipping, which is hurting many of our people.

I am asking the minister: when can we hear from the Minister of Transportation that something will actually be done? Thank you.

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

Hon. Olayuk Akesuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I can't really assume. I could send a message out. Again, I will do my very best to make sure that we do a proper strategy, again, work with my staff closely, with my Cabinet colleagues. I do believe that working together, for example, working with Mr. Curley, and the rest of my colleagues, and working on how we could do better with the government's Transportation Strategy. I think it's important that I have to lobby the federal government to figure out how we could do better and have more funds accessible to our territory to make our lives a bit easier on the costs of living and transporting materials to Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Akesuk. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley: Mr. Chairman, yes, these are important. Some commitment is made, and then there is normally a role in the departmental staff to really get further. They need direction.

They need direction from the officials. The ministers in the government say we need alternative transporting ideas and so on. They will figure it out for you. It's possible. What's not happening right now with this government is that they cannot relate normally. They normally put a blind eye even to the NNI Policy.

The NNI Policy has some good stuff in it, and also some negatives to it. The negative thing is; for those that want to propose to qualify for benefits under the NNI Policies that needs to get the most points for the contract tenders, that they can just establish a partnership relationship with the southern company, partnership arrangement, but no investment.

So the NNI Policy is very loosely worded, you can be confused even when it's just a partnership arrangement. The government tends to look at it as an Inuit majority owned. There should be a mechanism that a true northern, Inuit owned majority should have an investment portion in it to see that you actually have a majority of the funds or shares in this present company for new ventures that is going to really qualify to say majority Inuit owned company, not just a partnership arrangement.

So I'm asking the minister: will that be tied into your internal review strategy? If it's a strategy, we're going to get involved, but I believe it should start with a departmental internal consideration.

So therefore we can get both ends. Members of the committee may wish to eventually hold a public inquiry on that. So will you undertake to do that? That was one question. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Curley. In recognition of the time, and members could you please ask your questions, be a little bit more specific to your questions. Minister Akesuk.

Hon. Olayuk Akesuk (Interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I will try and work on it.

We've been trying to work harder on the NNI issue and also we'll probably have to come up with a report on the NNI process. I'm sure that it's evident that we'll have to improve this.

I will want to work very closely with you when we start working with the *Nunavummi Nangminiqaqtunik Ikajuuti* Policy. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Akesuk. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): I do have more questions, but I don't know how many more questions I do have left. I would like to adjourn, but I'll have to divvy up my questions to the ministers. So I would like to know how many questions I have left. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Curley. If we are correct, up to date, you still have seven more remaining questions and also to recognize the clock and we still have other business to deal with. So we'll just adjourn for now. We'll start again tomorrow morning, if I'm correct, to acknowledge, we'll resume again at ten o'clock in the morning tomorrow. Thank you.

>>*Meeting adjourned at 17:55*

