



Return to Written Question

Asked by: John Main, MLA for Arviat and Whale Cove

Asked of: Hon. Lorne Kusugak, Minister of Health

Number: 88-5(2)

Date: June 9, 2021

Subject: Health Staffing Status in Arviat and Whale Cove

Question(s):

- 1. Expressing the information in a comparable format to what was provided in Return to Written Question 45-5(2), what was the status of the Department of Health's staffing in the communities of Arviat and Whale Cove as of June 1, 2021?**

Example of format:

By position in the Department of Health, which positions are currently filled by:

- a) Indeterminate employees;**
- b) Term employees;**
- c) Casual employees;**
- d) Individuals on contract; and**
- e) Internal transfers from other positions and/or departments?**

Response:

Indeterminate positions are permanently funded positions. Term positions have varying timelines (e.g., Vote 4 positions). Casual employees are temporary positions, typically renewed every four months. Casual positions are used to staff vacant permanent positions while the position is put through the staffing process, or the permanent budget is allocated for the position and employee number is secured. In some cases, there are unfunded casual positions to alleviate the workload.

Please see tables below for the status of the Department of Health's staffing in the communities of Arviat and Whale Cove. All information is accurate as of June 1, 2021.

Arviat - Staffing Summary	
Position Type	Number of Positions
Indeterminate (Full time)	22
Indeterminate (Part time)	0
Term (Vote 4)	1
Casual (Filling indeterminate positions)	27
Contract	0
Relief	0
Internal Transfer	0

Whale Cove - Staffing Summary	
Position Type	Number of Positions
Indeterminate	7
Indeterminate (Part-Time)	0
Term (Vote 4)	1
Casual (Filling indeterminate position)	2
Contract	0
Relief	6
Internal Transfer	0

2. As of June 1, 2021, which departmental positions in Arviat and Whale Cove were vacant?

Response:

As of June 1, 2021, 14 positions of 37 positions in Arviat and 8 positions of 16 positions in Whale Cove were vacant. However, some positions are filled by casual employees while positions go through the staffing process. See the table below for details by position title.

Arviat - Vacancies		
Position Title	Type of position	Status
1. Community Health Nurse	Indeterminate	Vacant - Filled by casual
2. Community Health Nurse	Indeterminate	Vacant - Filled by casual
3. Community Health Nurse	Indeterminate	Vacant - Filled by casual
4. Home and Community Care Worker I	Indeterminate - Vote 4 ¹	Vacant
5. Home and Community Care Worker I	Indeterminate	Vacant
6. Licensed Practical Nurse	Indeterminate	Vacant - Filled by casual
7. Mental Health Consultant	Indeterminate	Vacant

¹ Health received approval to staff HCCW Positions indeterminately.

8. Mental Health and Addictions (MHA) Assistant	Indeterminate	Vacant
9. MHA Youth Program Facilitator	Indeterminate	Vacant
10. Nurse Practitioner	Indeterminate	Vacant
11. Psychiatric Nurse	Indeterminate	Vacant
12. Public Health Nurse	Indeterminate	Vacant
13. Registered Midwife	Indeterminate	Vacant
14. Supervisor Home & Community Care	Indeterminate	Vacant

Whale Cove - Vacancies		
Position Title	Type of position	Status
1. Home and Community Care Worker II	Indeterminate Vote 4	Vacant
2. Home and Community Care Worker II	Indeterminate Vote 4	Vacant – Filled by casual
3. Community Health Nurse	Indeterminate	Vacant – Filled by casual
4. MHA Youth Program Facilitator	Indeterminate	Vacant
5. Community Oral Health Coordinator	Indeterminate	Vacant
6. Public Health Assistant	Indeterminate	Vacant
7. Licensed Practical Nurse	Indeterminate	Vacant
8. Public Health Nurse	Indeterminate	Vacant

9. For the period of June 1, 2019, to June 1, 2021, to what extent have staffing issues (e.g., staff turnover and vacancies) had a measurable impact on the provision of the health care services in Arviat and Whale Cove?

Response:

Every year, there are times health centres may have reduced services due to staffing and capacity challenges, which can last from a couple days to a few weeks. A reduction in services implies that the facility is open during normal operating hours; however, there is a reduction in the number of appointments and clinics available. During these periods, health centre staff continue to respond to emergencies to support the health and safety of Nunavummiut. Essential programming such as prenatal, well infant, and urgent/emergent care continue despite staffing challenges.

It is difficult to measure the impacts in Fall/Winter 2020/21 due to services being significantly impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions and outbreak in Arviat and Whale Cove. It should also be noted that Response Rapid Teams (RRT) were sent to Arviat and Whale Cove to support the outbreak response.

Staffing issues do not only have impact on the provision of health care services, but also on staff. In fact, chronic staffing challenges often leads to more frequent turn over in staff. Canada is facing a national health workforce shortage, most notably impacting the nursing workforce, which has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional factors, such as the lack of available staff housing, impact Health's ability to fill nursing vacancies with indeterminate staff. As you are aware, Health is projecting critical staffing levels in the community health centres across the territory this summer. At this time, Health is not anticipating the Arviat Health Centre and Whale Cove Health Centre to close this summer. However unexpected staffing changes may occur in any communities.

Health continues to work hard to find innovative ways to address those issues. In addition to short term strategies to mitigate the current shortages territory wide, Health is working on long-term solutions to bring about sustainable change that will stabilize the health workforce. The *Roadmap to Strengthen the Nunavut Nursing Workforce 2021-2026* will be launched in the coming weeks.