



Nunavut Canada

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NUNAVUT

**Nunavut Leadership Forum:
Election of a Member of the Executive Council**

Official Report

Friday, October 30, 2020

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Members Present:

Mr. David Akeegok, Mr. Tony Akoak, Mr. Jeannie Ehaloak, Mr. George Hickes, Mr. David Joanasié, Mr. Joëlie Kaernerck, Mr. Pauloosie Keyootak, Mr. Lorne Kusugak, Mr. Adam Lightstone, Mr. John Main, Ms. Margaret Nakashuk, Mr. Patterk Netser, Mr. Calvin Pedersen, Mr. David Qamaniq, Mr. Emiliano Qirngnuq, Mr. Paul Quassa, Mr. Allan Rumbolt, Mr. Joe Savikataaq, Mr. Craig Simailak.

>> *Meeting commenced at 15:00*

Prayer

Chairman (Mr. Paul Quassa)(interpretation): Thank you. I call the meeting of the leadership forum to order.

Before we proceed with the agenda, I call upon Member Mr. Keyootak to deliver the opening prayer, please.

>> *Prayer*

Adoption of Agenda

Chairman (interpretation): It is my duty to convene today's proceedings of the Nunavut Leadership Forum for the selection of a new member of the Executive Council.

All Members have copies of the procedures of the leadership selection process in front of them, and the procedures have been agreed to by Full Caucus.

A copy of today's agenda is also in front of all Members. Do Members agree to adopt the agenda?

Some Members: Agreed.

Nominations for a Cabinet Position

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. We will now proceed to the selection of a member of the Executive Council of Nunavut.

Please note that following the close of nominations, each candidate has up to five minutes to make remarks.

I remind Members that if you are nominated, you must immediately accept or decline the nomination.

The floor is now open for nominations. Member for Hudson Bay, Mr. Rumbolt.

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to nominate Mr. Lightstone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Member Lightstone, do you accept the nomination?

Mr. Lightstone: *Ii*, I accept.

Chairman (interpretation): Nominations? Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman-Speaker. I nominate Margaret Nakashuk. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Member Nakashuk, do you accept the nomination?

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman-Speaker. Yes, I accept. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. The Members have accepted their nominations. Are there any other nominations? Thank you. I have no more names for nominations. I apologize; I didn't see this. Member for Uqqummiut, Mr. Keyootak.

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I nominate the Member for Sanirajak, Joelle Kaerner.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Kaerner, do you accept the nomination?

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman-Speaker. Yes, I accept.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Are there any other nominations? Thank you. There being no more nominations, we will now proceed to the candidates' remarks. I wish to remind you that each candidate has up to five minutes to make remarks. We will proceed in alphabetical order by surname. First nominee to speak will be the Member for Amittuq, Mr. Kaerner.

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman-Speaker. I am Joelle Kaerner and I just accepted this nomination today for a ministerial position.

I will stand since I am more comfortable standing, therefore I stood to make my comments, and I believe we are free to speak, standing or not.

What I think I can speak to is over these past three years, which we just experienced and every time I go to the Legislative Assembly, I recall my constituents and thusly why I speak in Inuktitut.

Further, I take great pride in our language and I don't want to see it disappear, hence my continual advisement to youth to keep moving forward speaking in Inuktitut.

Additionally, if I was lucky enough to be chosen for this position, I would retain my priorities which are our elders, our youth and the incorporation of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* into government operations.

I believe we can make further progress on it if we use the principles I am always espousing: *katujjiqatigiingniq*, *ajjigiiktitiniq*, *ikajuqtigiingniq* (collaboration, equality, partnership) and again I believe we must use these principles within this Assembly as well as within the operations of this government on behalf of Nunavummiut.

Ever since we were elected, it has been quite difficult at times for me personally, but since I made a promise that if I am appointed for greater responsibilities, I will work hard and try my best. I will represent my constituents to the best of my abilities and be a proper representative and I would continue to use that.

I used to be shy when I first came in and I would start sweating bullets practically. Today, after the passage of these three years, yes, I have learned a great deal in being able to better represent my constituents and how government operates and how we as legislators can deal with the operations of this government.

I believe that I can properly manage the portfolio in the Assembly and to manage government employees by encouraging them to provide services to Nunavummiut as that is why they are hired.

I am not going to do any personal benefits for myself. No, I will not be doing that. I will treat everybody the same here. Our language is very important.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Chairman, first of all, I would like to thank the Uqqummiut MLA for nominating me for this position, and I for once have learned that quite a bit as I was a rookie when I first stepped into this House and I was just describing myself. I used to be very shy and I would smell like a pig, but now I think I have learned from my experience.

As my late mother would always say, "If you want to pursue what you believe in, step to it and make sure you treat everyone equally with passionate and compassion when it comes to our constituents."

I do believe that if I get voted into this position, I will do my best as I have stated when I first became an MLA that I will truly do my best to support and help my constituents and advocate on behalf of them.

Therefore I just have to stand up to this plate and I think I can learn more and I do believe that when it comes to *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*, our elders, our youth, that we need to be more open to the people whom we serve. I do believe with all my ability that I will do my

best when it comes to helping others and that I sincerely want to thank you, the Uqqummiut MLA, for nominating me for this and so I will do my best. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. To the next candidate. (interpretation ends) We will now proceed to the next candidate. Mr. Lightstone, you may rise in your place and proceed.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would also like to thank the Member for Hudson Bay for nominating me.

Today marks three years to the day since we were elected to the Fifth Assembly. We have all spent a considerable amount of time together and have come to know each other very well.

I recognize that all Members in the room today will have a very difficult decision to make because I believe that all three of us, Mr. Kaernerk, me, and Ms. Nakashuk, would make excellent Cabinet Ministers.

This is now the fourth leadership forum of the Fifth Assembly and my second time being nominated for a cabinet position. It is true that I ran in the initial leadership forum in 2017 and I was not successful. However, I am grateful for the outcome as I have come to understand and appreciate the important role that a Regular Member plays in this Assembly and in our own communities.

Since the initial leadership forum, two Regular Members have been acclaimed and joined the Executive Council. At the time these opportunities were presented, I felt I was not ready and had more to learn as the role of a Regular Member has a substantial learning curve. I now have three years under my belt and I'm very comfortable in my position, and I am confident in my ability as a Regular Member as well as in my potential as a Cabinet Minister.

I believe there are three key requirements for a Minister: commitment, competence, and compassion, and I believe I have a good balance of the three.

Ministers are responsible for the activities of their portfolios, and I'm ready to assume such responsibility. Throughout the lifetime of this Assembly, I have made it clear that I have high expectations of cabinet and take accountability of this government very seriously. If I'm selected today, I will hold myself to those same expectations.

I recognize that being a member of the Executive Council is demanding and I believe I have also displayed my work ethic. I do my reading. I conduct research to ensure I thoroughly understand the topic before I bring the matter up and that will not change.

As the youngest Member of this Assembly, I can assure you that what I lack in years I make up for in drive and determination.

In closing, today I am asking for support from my fellow Members. If elected to the Executive Council, I will endeavour to maintain your confidence by providing effective leadership and oversight in whatever portfolio I receive.

Regardless of the outcome of this vote, I will continue to work hard on behalf of all Nunavummiut and work collaboratively with all Members. Thank you for your consideration.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Continuing on. (interpretation ends) We will now proceed to the next candidate. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Main, for nominating me.

Good afternoon, my colleagues, my family, and Nunavummiut. I want to start off by offering my gratitude as I am able to partake in this process. Although I had no intention of running for leadership within government as a Minister initially, I do have extensive experience in many aspects of government operations as I spent well over 25 years working for the government, and I feel comfortable understanding the nuances of government operations.

During the GNWT era is when I first started working for the government and I believe I am capable of making valuable contributions to the executive branch, and in providing directions towards advancing the position of our government.

I held my first job in government as a summer student, where I was hired in the springtime as a (interpretation ends) summer student (interpretation) employee, and our first task was to paint the community signage rocks on the hillside that spelled out “Welcome to Pangnirtung”.

It was a warm sunny beautiful spring day, and I wore my shorts which were basically cut-off jeans and our group went to paint the signage, and I wasn’t aware that mosquitoes were out in force, and I wasn’t wearing any mosquito repellent or clothing, and here it was, my very first job for the government which turned out to be one of the best jobs I ever had.

I moved on from there and was hired by Tourism as tourism coordinator for ten years, and I ended up becoming the manager at the tourism office. I grew career-wise from that position as I learned to become a manager. I learned how to use the hiring process, how to apply for funding, training staff, as well as collaborative work by debating and negotiating issues with our team of workers. What I used to enjoy most about that job was working with the elders who came to the office several times a week, as I continuously consulted the elders back then.

In later years, my husband and I moved around to different communities where I ended up working in different roles such as an adult educator, interpreter/translator at the health

centre, a hospital worker with the Department of Health, and later on I was hired within the Department of Education as human resources service worker. This was changed by the Department of Family Services to a coordinator for the Baffin region, and I was taking ongoing career development training through my position overseeing the social workers in 12 communities.

These are some of the positions I have held, and in looking at my past experience and knowledge, I believe I am quite capable of handling the position and that I can make valuable contributions therein. I am also capable of voicing my ideas and opinions on issues I am passionate about, both within this House and within our community, as I believe I can be a good representative.

I am very appreciative and thank each and every one of you that I am able to be a part of the team here. After our election, I was chosen to serve as the chairperson for one of the committees, specifically the finance committee and the Canadian group of MLAs where I am a member.

In looking at my past work, I believe I can be a member in good standing, and I am also quite proud of my two colleagues who are also running for this position and I hope they succeed as none of us will change outwardly, as we will still be the same people. Thank you.

Questioning Candidates for a Cabinet Position

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) I will now review the procedures for the question period for candidates of the Executive Council.

Members may ask one of the candidates.

As Chair, I will exercise discretion with respect to the order in which the candidates are invited to respond to the questions, and I will enforce a reasonable limitation on the length of questions, but answers will be limited to two and a half minutes.

Do Members have questions for the candidates? (interpretation) Member for Iqaluit-Niaqunngu, Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is: in the event that you become a Minister and you find that you are in a disagreement with the direction that the senior manager of the department has taken on a certain file, can you explain in detail what steps you would take in making sure that your point of view is taken into account as the Minister and that you get the support you need to make the file move in a direction that you feel it should go? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. I will now invite the candidates to respond. I will proceed in alphabetical order by surname. The first candidate will be Mr. Kaernek.

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for the question. This is dependent on the existing policies I would have to follow, as the government has already enacted (interpretation ends) policies (interpretation) that govern the department I would have to manage, so this would form part of my overall plan to ensure that what I am given is managed in the best possible manner, and as I mentioned, equality or equitable allocations. That is what I would try to follow in terms of the policies and I would try to improve the departmental operations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Next will be Member Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a bit of a difficult question to answer without much context, but if I ever found myself in that type of situation where my own opinion on a matter differed from what the recommendations were coming from the senior officials, I guess I would first like to put the matter on hold and request additional information and find out all the facts to find out where exactly our opinions differ, and then determine the way forward from there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. The third candidate is the Member for Pangnirtung, Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In thinking of the question from the perspective of a manager, it is always better to first understand the overall facts overlying the issue, and why it turned out in that manner and whether we can agree on the direction that is achievable, and further, the impacts it may have.

If I was uncomfortable with the matter, I would have to seriously deliberate on the matter to ensure I am agreeable with the strategic direction of the department, and how best to facilitate the accrual of benefits that can assist Nunavummiut. We must always think of ideas or solutions as elected representatives. We need to properly understand the context of the issue, at least in my line of thinking. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. The next member to ask a question will be the Member for Baker Lake, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good luck to all three. It has been a few weeks I have only been here, so it's going to be interesting for me. It's my first time here.

Right across the territory, as you know, there are a growing number of elders that can no longer live alone. They require basic living assistance. I firmly believe the government must start planning for it immediately. What is your point of view on providing elders' care outside of the regional hubs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. The candidates will now respond to that question. The first one will be Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My point of view of providing elder care outside of the regional hubs is that it's absolutely imperative. I believe it's important that our elders are able and capable of aging in their own homes and in their own communities and amongst their own family. That's my opinion on the matter and I can't say much more. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Candidate Member for Pangnirtung, Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The process that the government follows right now where elders are sent outside of Nunavut, none of us like that. We want our elders to remain in our communities, but elders who require continuous care need to be taken care of properly and I totally support the planning to keep them in Nunavut.

I have also raised this question myself to see what else we can do in our communities so that we can keep our elders in our community. I think we have to continue pushing to keep our elders in their home communities and be provided adequate care. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Member for Amittuq, Member Kaernerk.

Mr. Kaernerk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ever since I got here, I have been representing and advocating for our elders whereby I am usually mentioning our elders.

We require their wisdom and their wisdom could provide tangible benefits to our younger people. To use myself as an example, I grew up with elders and I feel empathetic towards them. Their wisdom, capabilities, and skills are what I see.

In trying to deal with local issues, sometimes it causes friction, but I want equality amongst our communities. I believe government has to be more equitable in providing facilities, mainly due to the reason that our elders already lived a life of hardship, as they never grew up in a nice warm house like our generations.

This is what I keep returning to, that it will assist our younger generations to serve our elders, which I feel is necessary both within this Assembly as well as government operations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. We will go back to questions. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman-Speaker. I have a question about the scarcity of employment opportunities for my constituency and this search for jobs is conducted daily by many residents. Now, with the lack of job opportunities, I would like to hear from the candidates what their thoughts are on this issue, as well as any personal

experiences they may have, and if they have any thoughts or suggestions on how to combat that. I would like to hear their views on this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. I will be saying each name of the candidates and first will be Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for that question. If I understood correctly, you are asking about unemployed people and income support recipients.

When I was director for income support in the Baffin region, we reviewed over 14,000 clients who received benefits within one year. It's obvious that that number has gone up, but there are very few jobs that exist locally.

I have always wanted to see a strategy to try to introduce more training opportunities within the communities, either cultural skills training or other traditional skills that Inuit can use to garner more revenue. Although it starts off small, the benefits are quite noticeable, even when the government feels it is too limited.

However, the one year left on our mandates is a very short time to try to enact changes, so I find it hard to say I will do such and such work to enact changes because I don't want to make commitments I can't realize and which would take more than one year to resolve.

I think we should look at a long-term solution for Nunavut where we create jobs that are specific towards Nunavut. That's how I can respond. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Second is Member for Amittuq, Mr. Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Indeed, this subject of the lack of employment opportunities and no job prospective exists in our communities, and many youth are walking around who have already graduated high school, that I see on the streets of our community due to having nothing to apply towards.

One thing we can remind our youth of is the fact that you have to apply for opportunities and all of the training options if you wish to get assistance past the monthly support and our MLAs also have constituency assistants in their communities that can help, so I would encourage them to use that avenue.

If they are looking to find job opportunities or interested in funding, they can work towards applications for specific government programs and we have to be creative as many communities don't have alternatives, especially smaller communities, and you have to deliberate on your options.

Additionally, it would be a good challenge to look at as to what are some ways to find solutions within our government and I believe we have more options available than are bandied about today, and that includes me. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. I have no more names on my list for those who would like to ask a question. I apologize; I went a little bit too quickly. Candidate Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for the question. It's definitely a very important question that needs to be asked.

I believe that each community has its own unique employment market and I believe that training must be tailored to match it, but that's for the existing job market. I believe it's well known that we have a very limited job market and labour force.

I think that the real answer lies in the future potential for the service sector and specifically our entrepreneurs and small businesses. I believe that they're the key to developing future employment opportunities across this territory and in each community. I believe that the entrepreneurs are the key, but the fact remains that being an entrepreneur is difficult and starting up a business is a substantial risk and is one that does not have very high rates of success.

I believe that more supports should be made available to assist entrepreneurs, specific issues like training to assist entrepreneurs in strengthening their business, such as understanding payrolls, deductions, and bookkeeping and ensuring that they're able to maintain their business, as well as plan not just keep afloat but plan for future development. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Election for a Cabinet Position

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. I again apologize to you, Member. There being no more questions for the candidates, we will now proceed to balloting.

Members may fill out their ballots at their seats. After filling out the ballots...well, you don't really need to be filling it out, but once you have written down your vote, please deposit the ballots in the ballot box located just past the *qamutiik*. Please be aware of the social distancing requirement on your way to the ballot box.

Thank you. (interpretation ends) Order. (interpretation) Please note that voting has been done.

The ballots will now be taken to a secure area in the Precinct for counting. Members may wish to wait in the lounge while we take a brief recess. We will clearly indicate the results of the vote once the ballots have been counted. They can now be taken to the secure area.

>>*Meeting recessed at 15:42 and resumed at 15:49*

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. I hope I am loud and clear. Thank you, my colleagues. The forum has reconvened. I wish to advise Members that Member Nakashuk has been chosen to serve on the Executive Council of Nunavut.

>>*Applause*

The appropriate motion will be moved in the House at its next sitting on Monday to confirm the selection.

I will now ask for a motion to destroy the ballots. Do you want the ballots destroyed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. The ballots will be destroyed.

Thank you. I will now invite Minister-designate, Ms. Nakashuk, to make brief remarks. Ms. Nakashuk.

Ms. Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am especially grateful to our colleagues for making that choice and to every Member here. Although I am not party to my nuclear family, I want to express my thanks to them as they continually express their sincere support up to now.

Also, during this session, I wish to move forward with the progress we have made as we have no choice but to deal with the issues and try to grab the remnants on the ground that may have been dropped due to our reaching the stretch run, and that it is still difficult to complete our original vision.

Nonetheless, I wish to first voice my appreciation to my colleagues who were my accompanying candidates in this process.

I will not change in any manner and I will continue to treat everybody with respect and work together through *Piliriqatigiinniq*. I wish to thank all of you and let's move forward. Even though we only have one short year left, I also want to be involved in finding ways to work together for our future. Thank you.

>>*Applause*

Chairman: I remind all Members that the House reconvenes at 1:30 on Monday, November 2, 2020.

The Nunavut Leadership Forum stands adjourned.

>>*Meeting adjourned at 15:52*

