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Iqaluit

Speaker: The Honourable Paul Quassa, MLA

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

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Iqaluit, Nunavut
Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Members Present:

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

>>House commenced at 13:30

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Paul Quassa) (interpretation): Good day. Before we proceed, I ask Member Patterk to say the opening prayer.

>>Prayer

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Nunavummiut who are following the proceedings, please feel welcome as we proceed today.

Budget Address. (interpretation ends)
Minister of Finance, Minister Hickes.

Item 2: Ministers' Statements**Minister's Statement 534 – 5(2):
Budget Address 2021-2022**

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to introduce our government's proposed budget for 2021-22. This is the third budget I have

had the privilege to present to this Assembly.

Before going on, let me thank all those who have worked behind the scenes to help shape this year's budget.

Since the early days of this Fifth Assembly, our work has been guided by *Turaaqtavut*, our shared vision for Nunavut rooted in our Inuit societal values. Mr. Speaker and members, that vision and these values continue to guide our efforts to run a modern public government and deliver services to our growing population.

Each of our government's budgets has rested on *Turaaqtavut*. Our first budget set the stage to begin delivering its priorities. Our second set out a series of practical and responsible steps towards implementing them.

Last year I presented a people-oriented budget of optimism tempered by fiscal responsibility. I likened our situation then to moving into young adulthood while still relying on the support systems that helped guide us through our adolescence. Last year's tempered optimism was appropriate considering the challenges we continue to face, budget after budget. Mr. Speaker and members, we are each familiar with these challenges, many of which relate to delivering public services across a territory as vast as ours.

Other aspects of our territory amplify these challenges. For example, when we began our journey as a public government, we started behind every other Canadian jurisdiction in terms of our infrastructure and capacity to provide the programs and services other

Canadians take for granted. Mr. Speaker, we can tackle these challenges head on when we work together as a government, as an Assembly, as communities, as regions, and as a territory.

Having a strong federal partner that understands the benefits of working together is critical to our efforts. In last year's Budget Address I prodded the federal government to recognize our needs in several areas, particularly health care and housing. Our message, direct and carefully chosen, is beginning to resonate and we are starting to see results. We are gaining more and more traction in our discussions, and I hope we can continue to work collaboratively with them to tackle the issues we have been raising year after year. I will have more to say about this later in my address.

Achievements

But first I want to reflect on just how far we have come during this Fifth Assembly. As Nunavut approaches its 22nd birthday, we have many successes to celebrate. Let me outline just a few.

In the last year and a half alone our government dealt with two serious events, each of which required our full attention. The first was a major ransomware attack on our computer network that threatened to completely shut us down. The second occurred a few months later with the emergence of the COVID-19 virus and the resulting pandemic.

It may seem surprising that I refer to these incidents as successes. After all, government computer issues are not top of mind for most Nunavummiut, and we

are still grappling with COVID-19 when worldwide it shows few signs of relenting. I refer to them as successes because, as we navigate through crises, it has become evident just how capable and dedicated we are in protecting our territory and all Nunavummiut.

Mr. Speaker, when the challenges came, we responded and we turned them into opportunities to grow and become stronger. We were able to do this because of our increasing skills, knowledge, and confidence as a territory and our evolving maturity as a government.

For each of these challenges we called upon one of the values passed down by our elders, *qanuqtuurniq*, and applied it government-wide. Our capacity to adapt and innovate, coupled with the resourcefulness and willingness of Nunavummiut to rally in support of our efforts and of each other, helped us face both these events with courage and resolve.

We dealt with the ransomware attack not by giving in, but by working tirelessly with experts to completely revamp our computer systems and make them more resistant to cyber-attack. We now have a more secure system that is operating better than ever. While our system was down, our public servants demonstrated resourcefulness, professionalism, and dedication. Working together, they were able to restore core services, rebuild the network, and keep the business of government going.

Mr. Speaker and members, little did we know at the time, but pivoting to new cloud-based services and collaborative capabilities would position us well for

working remotely during the pandemic. When COVID-19 hit, we were prepared and ready to respond. Our teams had recent experience managing uncertainty, adjusting processes, and working together in new ways. Our government had already put the new *Public Health Act* into force.

In short order, we set up isolation hubs, conducted in-territory testing, produced thousands of made-in-Nunavut reusable masks, provided funding for food security and for small businesses, and made sure the airplane links that are so vital to our communities could function safely and without interruption. Mr. Speaker and members, we supported daycares, developed school opening plans, and put in place a variety of effective public health measures too numerous to mention here. Throughout, we kept Nunavummiut informed about what was going on so we could be prepared for what was coming next.

We relied on our civil service to coordinate government-wide efforts to contain the virus, even while they tried to keep up with their usual work, juggle child care, and support their own families and friends.

We appreciate that businesses and other organizations across the territory also faced challenges and contributed their own energies in support of their customers, employees, and colleagues.

Mr. Speaker and members, in particular I want to take a moment to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of hamlets in keeping their residents safe and supported during uncertain and unfamiliar moments over the last year.

By organizing community food deliveries, at-home activities, local radio programs that informed and entertained, and screening and vaccination clinics, hamlets put into action our Inuit societal values. These collaborative efforts demonstrate to me what life in Nunavut is all about: caring for our communities, caring for each other, and overcoming challenges together.

As we continue to live with COVID, I want to acknowledge our federal counterparts for their efforts in trying to understand and support Nunavut's needs during the pandemic. We have had a good dialogue, and I appreciate their willingness to work with us to find solutions both logistical and financial to prevent the spread, manage the outbreak, and support recovery and vaccinations. I look forward to continuing this relationship.

Mr. Speaker and members, thankfully not all our challenges and successes have been so dramatic. One achievement that holds great promise for our future occurred in 2019 when, after many years of discussions, Canada, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and our government finalized the Devolution Agreement in Principle that will guide negotiation of the final agreement to transfer jurisdiction over Crown lands and resources from Canada to Nunavut.

We followed this important step forward by declaring Nunavut Day to be a territorial statutory holiday, marking a significant milestone for Inuit and our territory, the day the *Nunavut Agreement* and *Nunavut Act* were adopted and received Royal Assent. Had these significant events not occurred, we

would not be meeting in this Assembly today.

It is appropriate that Nunavummiut enjoy a day of reflection and be given an opportunity to take pride in how far we have come since those early days. We're more capable than ever to take on bigger tasks that build our territory.

Mr. Speaker and members, with funding from Canada, we are advancing major improvements to six of our airports, including a long overdue expansion of the Rankin Inlet Airport that will quadruple its capacity.

>> *Applause*

We have also made good headway in working towards an undersea fibre-optic cable to boost our Internet capacity and speeds by complementing our current satellite-based network.

>> *Applause*

Once the cable's route has been finalized, enhanced connectivity will help us strengthen our links with each other, with the rest of Canada, and beyond.

In collaboration with Canada and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, we have set the foundation for work towards an addictions and trauma treatment centre to be built right here in Nunavut.

>> *Applause*

This will help Nunavummiut recover in-territory, surrounded by friends and family and closer to our traditions, culture, and language. We are very

motivated to move forward with this work to benefit our people.

Mr. Speaker and members, last year we strengthened our relationship with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated by signing the Katujjiqatigiinni Protocol. It clearly sets out our shared goal, and I quote, "to collaborate to improve the economic, health, social and cultural well-being of Nunavut Inuit, and to help Nunavut realize its potential as a healthy and prosperous part of Canada." My colleagues and I look forward to seeing our shared vision transformed into action.

Allow me to mention something else worth celebrating: for the third year in a row, as mentioned yesterday, the Government of Nunavut has been recognized as one of Canada's top 100 employers for young people. Fourth year now, my apologies. Creating a work environment that will attract promising young Nunavummiut to public service can only make us stronger and is something else we can take pride in. These achievements show what we have done and what we can do.

Economic Prospects

Mr. Speaker, let me move on to the year ahead. To set the scene, the latest report of the Conference Board of Canada from October 2020 predicts our economy could expand by up to 11 percent through 2021, driven mostly by mining. This continues a trend that began several years ago that has been led by annual mining sector growth. If these forecasts hold true, 2021 has the potential to be another strong year of economic growth, despite the impact of the pandemic.

It is important to recognize that not all sectors are unscathed. The pandemic has been hard on other sectors like tourism, construction, and food services. Their recovery in 2021 will depend on the course of the virus itself.

Mr. Speaker and members, jobs-wise, Statistics Canada predicts our territorial unemployment rate will continue to hover around 14 percent, though this will also depend on how quickly we can get back to normal in the year ahead.

Fiscal Situation

As for our government's overall fiscal situation, we expect to end the 2020-21 fiscal year in reasonably good shape. This is due largely to the \$130 million in additional funding Canada provided to help us deal with COVID and the \$78 million in new funding we received for medical travel under the Non-Insured Health Benefits program.

>> *Applause*

Mr. Speaker and members, the federal COVID support remains critical to our efforts to fight the virus. The Non-Insured Health Benefits funding, while a one-time payment, brings the federal government closer to acknowledging the actual costs of delivering this important medical travel program on their behalf. We look forward to finalizing a long overdue agreement with the federal government on this critical program before the end of March.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, had we not received this federal support, I would be reporting a significantly different fiscal situation today. As you are aware, our actual year-end results will not be final

for a few months. An added wrinkle this year is the likelihood that departments will have funds left over at year-end due to COVID-related disruptions.

Mr. Speaker and members, the take-away for members and Nunavummiut is that, from a fiscal standpoint, our government has emerged from the first year of the COVID pandemic in good shape.

Looking ahead to 2021-22, we forecast revenues of \$2.39 billion. As always, most of our revenues will come from the federal territorial funding financing transfer. It has grown by 4 percent over last year and will amount to just over \$1.78 billion. We can also expect to receive another \$110 million through other federal transfers, including \$44 million that will come to us through the Canada Health Transfer.

Mr. Speaker and members, as an aside for members' interest, I along with the Premier and Minister of Health are working with our counterparts across Canada to encourage the federal government to enhance this transfer in recognition of the higher health care costs provinces and territories face over the long term. We have nothing more to report today but are hopeful these discussions will bear fruit for Nunavummiut and other Canadians.

In addition, we are budgeting to receive about \$240 million through third party agreements. We expect to generate about \$255 million in our own revenues next year. This includes nearly \$158 million in taxes. Other sources include staff housing rent, revenues from the sale of fuel and liquor, fees, and other payments. The budget in front of you

proposes over \$2 billion in investments this coming fiscal year. This includes the \$164 million in capital spending the Assembly approved last fall. The remaining \$1.86 billion, proposed through these main estimates, are to support the core operations and maintenance of our government departments and agencies.

Mr. Speaker and members, as in the past, we will again set aside a contingency fund. We have seen over the past year just how important having this flexibility is. Last year we held back \$50 million. Given all the unknowns surrounding COVID, we think it is prudent to hold back a bit more this year. For 2021-22, we have set aside \$75 million, about 3.5 percent of our budget. Mr. Speaker, this financial cushion will allow us to respond to unforeseeable events and pressures during the balance of this mandate without leaving the next government in bad shape at year-end.

We are projecting an operating deficit of about \$14.3 million. Mr. Speaker and members, even under COVID conditions, this is a smaller deficit than what we projected in last year's budget. This projection assumes we spend the entire contingency. If we do not, we anticipate being able to leave a small surplus for the Sixth Assembly.

I would like to add that our credit rating remains strong. Even in these tough times, we remain squarely in the group of the most credit-worthy provinces and territories in Canada, right behind the triple A rating of the federal government.

In short, Mr. Speaker, we continue to manage our fiscal purse well. Despite

the unforeseen challenges we faced this past year, our financial situation is such that we can be comfortable leaving it to the next government.

Budget Priorities

Turaaqtavut continues to guide how we allocate our resources this year. As I said earlier, *Turaaqtavut* is our shared vision for Nunavut rooted in our Inuit values. Mr. Speaker and members, we intend to spend the dollars available to us in support of those values.

Inuusivut

Investing in our health is more important now than ever. The pandemic highlighted the importance of having health and social services available in the territory and in our communities. With this in mind, we propose a budget of \$471.1 million for the Department of Health, which includes about \$20 million more this year that we are reinvesting into health care. We can do this because Canada agreed to increase its co-pay towards medical travel.

We are enhancing the health care services available to Nunavummiut in different ways, including by hiring more health care professionals. Some will be assigned to our new colorectal cancer screening program. This is a long overdue measure to combat what is now the second most common form of cancer in Nunavut and is a wise investment for the future. Early cancer detection is not only more cost-effective than later stage treatment, but most importantly it leads to greater patient success. We intend to allocate \$1.2 million in new funding to get this program up and running.

>> *Applause*

We also propose to invest \$405,000 to add four new positions to Iqaluit Health Services, including a CAT scan technician. This is part of a longer term staffing plan to improve our ability to diagnose complicated health issues right here in Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker and members, we know pharmacy services in our remote communities need a more cohesive approach. As a first step, we will provide our pharmacy division with new, director-level management and a territory-wide mandate, and will create two new clinical pharmacist positions at the hospital.

We know how unpredictable COVID is and that it is not going away anytime soon. As I said earlier, we are confident we can continue to manage this pandemic, but we need to back this confidence with adequate human and financial resources. For that reason, we propose to allocate \$4.8 million to fund our Pandemic Response Secretariat. This formally builds on the team we put in place this year and extends their work and mandate into 2021-22, helping ensure we maintain our dedicated team to tackle new pandemic threats that may arise.

Mr. Speaker and members, more generally, and following up on the ongoing construction of two new community health centres in Sanikiluaq and Kinngait, we plan to allocate another \$4.5 million to improve health services across the territory, including enhanced security at our health centres.

Earlier in my address, I noted that we are preparing for a culturally appropriate, Nunavut-based addictions and trauma treatment centre. We look forward to this facility and programming being finalized by the next government. In the meantime we will maintain our current out-of-territory counselling and treatment supports. Mr. Speaker, this budget proposes \$10.6 million to renew these mental health and addictions treatment contracts for the coming year, along with another \$3 million to renew physicians' contracts.

The last two decades have shown that Nunavummiut are strong and adaptable. We are a vibrant territory and want to keep moving forward together. This begins with families. Mr. Speaker, building on investments we made in prior years, we propose to direct \$5.3 million towards the Department of Family Services. First, we will increase our support for adults and children with complex needs by allocating \$2.7 million to better ensure their well-being in residential placements. We will invest a further \$600,000 on youth crisis initiatives across the territory.

Last year, we spent \$1 million to expand emergency shelters and plan new ones for the victims of family violence. Our work in this vital area will continue this year through an investment of \$825,000.

Mr. Speaker and members, we know the housing spectrum needs to include homeless Nunavummiut. We will continue to boost our shelter capacity by investing an additional \$515,000 to help those who need immediate accommodation due to homelessness.

For low-income seniors, we will invest a total of \$660,000 to boost our supplementary benefits program. We continue to work on long-term care facilities that will allow us to bring seniors with complex needs back to Nunavut from southern care homes.

As we move forward to improve outcomes in our social portfolios, we propose to allocate a total of \$134.5 million for the Department of Justice in 2021-22. This is a well-justified, unintended increase of 5 percent over last year.

Mr. Speaker and members, we will use these funds to support independent civilian oversight of serious incidents involving the RCMP, hire three new RCMP officers, increase public service employment opportunities for Inuit in local RCMP detachments, and upgrade police radios to ensure police safety as well as more effective communications. These measures will cost just under \$3 million.

We plan to open the Aaqqigiarvik Correctional Healing Facility in Iqaluit this fall as a much-needed replacement to the Baffin Correctional Centre. We are seeking \$3 million to staff this new facility.

Mr. Speaker, we have budgeted \$310,000 to create an independent Corrections Investigation Office, an important step to ensuring accountability and transparency within a modern and effective *Corrections Act*. This will be another first for our territory.

We are proposing another \$320,000 to expand the community-based therapeutic justice program currently operating in

Cambridge Bay. Mr. Speaker, this well-received program helps address the root causes of criminal behaviour, including mental health, addictions, and trauma. In partnership with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, we will expand this successful program to Arviat.

We are also planning to hire up to seven articling students next year from the Nunavut Law Program. We are seeking an additional \$330,000 to create three new positions for this purpose, and we will fund the other positions from within.

Pivaallirutivut

Mr. Speaker and members, at this point I would normally provide you with a list of economic and infrastructure development initiatives to help grow our economy in ways that align with our cultural values, but these are not normal times – not here, not anywhere else in the world or in Canada. The revenues we would usually commit to economic development have largely been diverted to sustaining our businesses and supporting Nunavummiut during these difficult times.

Over this past year we have paid out over \$600,000 in business relief funding for small businesses and artists.

>> *Applause*

We have also paid out \$2.8 million so far to help lower-wage Nunavummiut earn more on the job for the essential work they do.

>> *Applause*

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, among our earliest decisions last year was to support northern airlines. The goal of our support so far, which applied until the end of December, has been to help our airlines break even so they continued to fly, maintaining the vital connections our communities rely on. We are actively working together with airlines and Transport Canada to discuss possible support through to June.

Of course our success is based in helping the territory move forward. Mr. Speaker, this means that we must continue to address issues like our chronic housing shortage. This is something that simply cannot wait for better times. That is why we propose to allocate 12 percent of our overall budget to the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

>> *Applause*

This is almost exactly what we allocated in last year's pre-COVID budget. Through this budget, we will provide the corporation with nearly \$220 million for operations and maintenance. This will cover maintenance on the 90 new public housing units and 43 staff units we added this year, allowing us to develop plans to build a further 106 public housing units and to lease additional staff housing units in the upcoming year. In addition, we're exploring other opportunities to increase our housing stock this year.

Mr. Speaker, importantly, nearly \$48.5 million of the money allocated to the corporation will be directed to maintaining and improving our existing housing stock. This includes grants and contribution agreements to fund remediation of mould issues in some

housing units and to support local housing associations as well as homeowner maintenance and purchase programs.

>> *Applause*

Mr. Speaker, before I leave this topic, allow me to say that housing is another area where we have been able to make progress through a strong partnership with Canada. In 2019 the federal government agreed to provide us with \$290 million over ten years for housing, which has allowed us to make the long-term plans that support the proposed investments I have outlined here.

As our government has reiterated many times, long-term planning in collaboration with the federal government is how we will continue to make real progress in dealing with the challenges we face each year.

Sivummuaqpalliajjuvut

Mr. Speaker, when thinking about progress and success over the long term, we need to first think about our youth. We need to prepare our young people so that they can succeed. Our government is proposing to invest \$244 million through our Department of Education, nearly \$11 million more than last year.

>> *Applause*

Mr. Speaker, as we know, better education leads to better opportunities, better jobs, better social outcomes, and most importantly better futures.

Most of these new funds, about \$8.7 million, will support the creation of 72

new educator positions across the territory.

>> *Applause*

In addition to keeping up with population growth, we are proposing to improve the student-educator ratio itself, the calculation that guides how many teachers and other educators a community has.

>> *Applause*

Mr. Speaker, we know the importance of having strong and supportive educators. Increasing the number of educators is a meaningful way to help enhance our support for students so that they can succeed in their studies.

We are also proposing to invest almost \$2 million to improve school busing services throughout the territory.

>> *Applause*

Both of these changes will help ensure that our students have access to the instruction and the support they need to succeed in their studies.

Mr. Speaker and members, as part of our emphasis on finding Nunavut-based solutions to social challenges, we are committing a total of \$695,000 towards the development of a Bachelor of Social Work program right here in Nunavut.

>> *Applause*

Mr. Speaker, Nunavut Arctic College will deliver the program in partnership with Memorial University, and will ladder the degree from the existing Social Service Diploma program.

Nunavut will be celebrating the graduation of students from Nunavut Arctic College and the University of Saskatchewan law program this spring. We expect 23 successful graduates of this program, a success rate better than most every other law program in Canada.

>> *Applause*

Mr. Speaker, this made-in-Nunavut program brings much-needed legal skills and knowledge to the territory, and we look forward to these graduates continuing their careers here at home.

Inuunivut

Nunavut was created out of the need to give our Inuit language and culture the opportunity to grow and thrive in a world in which the more widely spoken languages like English have come to dominate, and look at how much we have been able to accomplish in two decades.

During the course of this Fifth Assembly we have created and distributed Inuktut resources for early learning and child care programs. We have developed hundreds of teaching and learning resources for our schools as part of our holistic Inuktut balanced literacy program. We are committed to continuing the development of these resources, ensuring the preservation and revitalization of Inuktut for generations to come.

We will look to new initiatives like the Inuktut Machine Translation tool to foster and grow the Inuit language. Developed with Microsoft, this modern technology will help preserve the Inuit

language by allowing those who speak Inuktitut and those who don't speak it yet to access translations everywhere there is Internet access.

Mr. Speaker, last year I spoke with great hope about the 2019 federal *Indigenous Languages Act* as a way to further strengthen Inuktitut. Just two months ago we signed the Terms of Reference for the Nunavut Partnership Table on Language and Education, a joint federal, territorial and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated venture that will develop collaborative approaches to address Inuktitut language and education issues in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, as part of this initiative, I am pleased to report the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated have together secured \$42 million from Canada over five years to support Inuktitut language and education. We look forward to continuing this partnership to enhance, preserve and revitalize Inuktitut.

I think it is appropriate that I mention these initiatives today in the month of February, our fifth annual Inuktitut language month, Uqausirmut Quviasuutiqarniq. This is a time to celebrate and express our language in all its forms as a way of honouring Inuit culture and language.

Katujjiqatigiinnivut

Mr. Speaker, I have provided many examples of our ability to work together to achieve our goals and realize our aspirations for Nunavut. This is Katujjiqatigiinnivut. For the Government of Nunavut, this means working in partnership with Inuit organizations, the

federal government, and private sector organizations. Of course this does not mean agreeing with everyone all the time; we will all have our own opinions, our own aspirations, and our own goals and that's okay. What matters is that we respect the views of others and that we work sincerely and diligently towards finding common ground.

Mr. Speaker, occasionally, working together towards a common goal can also mean trusting others enough to step back so that they can get work done. It can be about seeing the big picture and recognizing how we best contribute to it. This, to me, demonstrates maturity and growth.

At the beginning of this address I reminded you of an analogy I made last year: Nunavut as a young adult, optimistically looking to the future while relying on the supports we needed as a teenager. This analogy still holds. We still need support. We are still young. And I for one am still very optimistic about what the future holds.

>> *Applause*

But I suggest we have also proven ourselves as a territory this past year. We have proven ourselves to be capable, to be resourceful, to be able to work together and with others. In short, we have demonstrated a maturity and confidence that may not have been on full display before, even to ourselves.

Others have noticed. We have made enormous progress in our relationship with the federal government over the past year. I have been encouraged by what appears to be a new understanding on the part of federal officials.

In changing their approach to the Non-Insured Health Benefits contribution agreement, in providing funds to help us with COVID and in other ways, federal officials at all levels appear more willing than ever to work with us for the benefit of Nunavummiut. I look forward to continued collaboration with Ottawa.

Question: does Nunavut still face significant challenges? Of course. Most immediately, although our approach to rolling out vaccines is working well, COVID and its increasing number of variants remain concerning and very much in the foreground of our work. In the longer term our need for housing and other infrastructure, supports for our small economy, and solutions for our social challenges remain. As we balance the urgency of the pandemic with our needs for the future, we remain optimistic and dedicated.

As my ministerial colleagues and I head into this session, the next fiscal year and the last months of this Assembly, we do so with our goals firmly in mind. While this year has been tiring for many, we remain determined to do whatever we can to help move Nunavut forward. We are confident too of what we can still achieve by working together.

Mr. Speaker, one of our key tasks will be to build on the cooperative relationships with our partners, and take the next steps of developing longer term, sustainable and mutually beneficial arrangements. Working toward this goal is one way I intend to spend my time during this last year of the Fifth Assembly, striving always towards *Turaaqtavut*.

We still have lots of work to do, and I encourage all Members of this Assembly

to keep this in mind. I think we are all eager to bring this Assembly to a successful close and, in so doing, pave the way for an equally successful Sixth Assembly. I know I am. In past speeches I have talked about putting my work boots on. To be honest, Mr. Speaker, I haven't had time this past year to take them off. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Laughter*

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Let's proceed. Members' Statements. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Member Main.

Item 4: Members' Statements

Member's Statement 784 – 5(2): Update on COVID-19 in Arviat

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good day, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues.

Today I wish to make another statement on COVID-19 again, and firstly, we are extremely grateful to the Department of Health here in Arviat for taking on COVID-19 here in Nunavut as our government officials have been diligent in dealing with this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, it is approaching 100 days since the onset and discovery of the COVID-19 virus in our community of Arviat. I wish to ask our government to bear down to combat this pandemic, to try to eradicate it from Arviat and to achieve our goal of zero cases. I urge our government to also review the (interpretation ends) lockdown, (interpretation) as it is called in English,

as we are very tired of the lockdown in Arviat. We are very tired of the lockdown, frustrated with our inability to visit relatives and in being forced to not work in our jobs, tired of being not allowed to gather together as well.

Mr. Speaker, we comprehend the need for these restrictions, yes, and the various relevant conditions enacted to slow down the infection rates as these are common sense activities designed to combat the spread of COVID-19 in our community, and to look after our residents carefully.

Nonetheless, this lockdown we have experienced in Arviat also has hidden costs that are not financial, related to the health measures we have undertaken that impacted our own lives and livelihoods here in Arviat. It has impacted many residents, both elders, children, youth, extended families, private businesses as they have all been affected directly, especially when you look at the current restrictions in place.

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

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank my colleagues.

This lockdown has affected each of us differently as the restrictions touch upon all aspects of our lives, as first of all the Department of Health deals with health issues related to our physical and mental

health and the impacts related to the pandemic.

With the Department of Education, their operations have also been impacted tremendously, as our youth and children are unfortunately barred from school and activities and they have not seen their peers or their teachers in quite a few months.

Our elders too, are experiencing hardships, as they are forced to be socially recluse because of COVID-19, and indeed, many haven't seen their grandchildren for many days and weeks now, nor their own relatives as they can only see each other via their windows and that is how relatives can view each other, and this has been the practice for many days and months now.

Furthermore, our private sector where small business and private enterprises operate, are also deeply impacted by the ramifications associated with these health measures, and further those who suffer from various forms of abuse, especially spousal or family abuse or those who suffer from (interpretation ends) addictions (interpretation) have also been heavily impacted by the restrictions.

In looking at these associated matters, I am asking our Government of Nunavut to be more involved in collaborative measures and to search for more solutions as everyone's end goal is to end the pandemic, especially personally as the MLA representing the riding.

We understand the reasoning behind the restrictions, but we need to ensure that more effort is placed on eradicating COVID-19 here in Arviat. I urge this

government to put more emphasis on this initiative and to make it an emergency basis as I am aware that government cannot unilaterally combat this pandemic, but only in partnership with the various bodies that exist.

I will be asking questions to the Minister of Health at the appropriate time on this issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towtongie.

**Member's Statement 785 – 5(2):
Chesterfield Inlet Cultural Visitor
Centre**

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand here now to say good afternoon to Chesterfield Inlet and Rankin Inlet and Whale Cove. The community of Chesterfield Inlet have a building where traditional learning can be held and it was erected recently and its operating well, but there's no one working at the moment.

I believe a budget will be presented by Nunavut government to hire appropriate Inuit in the facility and the community of Chesterfield Inlet, the elders were very grateful and it will have a lot of benefits for our youth in terms of learning more about traditions.

When I saw the budget for Sivumuaqatigiinni mentioned earlier, I was quite happy. I know the Inuit organizations initiated this project, but it's the community members, communities like Chesterfield Inlet you don't have much employment going and if it's possible at the appropriate time I

will have a question regarding the facility. It's not just the facility. It will be a place for traditional culture learning and it will be safe for Inuit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Amittuq. MLA Kaernek for Amittuq.

**Member's Statement 786 – 5(2):
Mould Issues in Public Housing
Units**

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon Amitturmiut and Nunavummiut.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the housing issues we face, primarily the mould infestations we see since many of our buildings are quite old with many problems. I feel that the Nunavut Housing Corporation should emphasize supporting the LHOs in the communities to combat the mould infestation we face.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I believe the corporation can provide assistance in this manner, by offering tenants a chance to deal with mould or unit age issues, or broken areas due to lack of maintenance and prevention. I believe they can provide more support if they allow the tenants to have inspections that result in lower rental amounts, with a common inspection of each unit.

I believe that is one way they can provide more assistance to the communities, as the LHOs are also faced with many problems locally, actually many tenants in public housing units have a hard time when they are trying to look for ways to get more repairs or

support, so their question usually is: “Who can I approach?”

When they go to the housing association, especially in the other community I represent, there’s not much progress taking place. I would like to urge the Nunavut Housing Corporation, as in the last fall sitting, our acting minister for Housing stated that tenants should approach their local Housing Association, to address the issue of mould.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will ask the minister of Housing to make further considerations and address the issue of mould and perhaps even reduce rental rates for those individuals with unit problems. Thank you for giving me the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Before we move, I would just like to remind everyone while we are in the Assembly not to have your devices on, you need to have them on mute. I have heard more than one device going on now, just for you to be aware. Members’ Statements. MLA for Baker Lake, Mr. Simailak.

**Member’s Statement 787 – 5(2):
Petroleum Products and Pricing**

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like in all communities across Nunavut, the price of heating fuel and gasoline makes a big difference in daily lives.

In my home community of Baker Lake, there are a good number of homeowners, and some of those homeowners were working at the Agnico Eagle Mines before the pandemic, but they haven’t

been able to go back to work and have been doing their best to sustain their home with limited income.

There are also all the hunters that go out hunting caribou to provide food for their families and also provide food to those that are not able to go out hunting for themselves. Even when the temperatures were hovering around minus 50 degrees with the wind chill, these hunters were still going out, doing their best.

That being said, there have been concerns raised from my constituents with regard to the price of home heating fuel and gasoline. At the appropriate time I will be asking my questions to the appropriate minister. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members’ Statements. Iqaluit-Tasiluk, Mr. Hickes.

**Member’s Statement 788 – 5(2):
Nunavummiut Receive Business
Awards**

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay homage to a couple of businesses that have probably been quite hard hit by the COVID situation.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce’s fourth annual event was held in Yukon last week. Two notable winners, the first one is a top indigenous business of the year, located here in Iqaluit, Polar Outfitting owned by Alex Flaherty.

>> *Applause*

Mr. Speaker, this award is given with regard to the excellence and growth

innovation, marketing, environmental stewardship, outstanding service, and/or commitment to the preservation of its cultural values and identity. Mr. Speaker, out of all three territories, Alex won the top business award.

>> *Applause*

I would also like to commend Jennifer Lindell from Jenn87 Hair Styling, who won the top community champion of the year. Again, out of three territories, Jen won that award, which demonstrated a significant commitment to community enhancement.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge both of those businesses, who I imagine are very hard hit by the COVID situation, and I look forward to them being able to grow their business more and more every day as we recover from this pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. We are very proud of our fellow Nunavummiut. I wish you success. Members' Statements. I have no more names on my list. Continuing on. (interpretation ends) Returns to Oral Questions. No. 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. As we stated right at the start, our Chamber is not able to have our visitors at this time. (interpretation) No. 6. Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Niaqunnguu, Member Angnakak.

Item 7: Oral Questions

Question 1133 – 5(2): Firearms Legislation

Ms. Angnakak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. (interpretation ends) My questions are for the new Minister of Justice and they concern the issue of firearms legislation.

As the minister is aware, Bill C-21 was introduced last week in the House of Commons by the federal Minister of Public Safety. This bill contains a number of new measures related to the regulation of firearms in Canada.

The federal announcement concerning the introduction of the legislation indicated that “Provinces and territories...have identified firearm-related violence as a significant public safety issue in Canada. Some municipalities have raised risks posed by handguns and assault-style firearms.”

Mr. Speaker, although the need to prevent gun violence in our communities is extremely important, it is also important that federal firearm legislation does not place unreasonable barriers for our hunters to legally obtain their firearms licences. We don't want to go back to the days of the long gun registry, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister clarify what specific input he provided to the federal Minister of Public Safety concerning this proposed new legislation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Justice, Minister Hickee.

Hon. George Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member mentioned, I'm

new to the file and I appreciate the question. I've had a couple of different discussions with Minister Blair specifically on this topic. One of the exemptions that were provided was for indigenous hunters for recently banned firearms so that they can continue to hunt with those for...I believe it's a one-year period.

It is federal legislation, so we don't have a lot of control over it, yet one of the concerns or a couple of the concerns that I raised was the buyback program for weapons that were purchased legally that are now deemed illegal, of how that program is going to work, and I was assured that there would be an independent market analysis of those firearms.

One of the other strong conditions that I raised was access to information in Nunavut's official languages. I actually raised it on a national call that French and English aren't the only official languages recognized in Canada. There are other jurisdictions, especially Nunavut, that have additional languages that are to be used. I was assured that there would be work ongoing as this legislation is implemented that all our residents have access to the information so that they know how to adhere to the new laws. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Angnakak (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, on August 27, 2019 the federal Minister of Public Safety announced that \$2.25 million in funding would be provided over five years to Nunavut's Gun and

Gang Violence Action Fund, and that's to support a public awareness campaign on firearm safety.

As the minister is aware, his department's business plan indicates that one of its priorities is to partner with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to deliver a firearm education program. Can the minister clarify if this initiative will support courses being delivered in communities that will permit residents to obtain their firearms licences under federal legislation, and can he confirm how many courses are planned to be offered in Iqaluit during the upcoming 2021-22 fiscal year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. George Hickey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, that's the intent, although I'm sure the member realizes that under the current restrictions of gatherings, it has been very difficult to put many training programs across the territory in communities face to face. As that is a type of a course that has to be done face to face, I don't have the number of courses that are going to be available. It's going to be fluid as conditions ease from COVID over the next period of time, hopefully sooner rather than later. I'm sure we're all getting tired of this COVID-19 thing.

I think it's a very important initiative and I appreciate the flexibility. When it's a gangs and violence federal initiative, I like to think we don't have a gang problem here, but maybe I'm out of touch with some communities. I think it's very important to recognize the

flexibility that they have allowed us to be able to roll out something in such a positive way as the safe handling of firearms. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must admit that title threw me back a little bit when I saw “gangs.”

Mr. Speaker, the federal announcement concerning the introduction of Bill C-21 indicated that it will “Combat intimate partner and gender-based violence, and self-harm involving firearms by creating ‘red flag’ and ‘yellow flag’ laws. These laws would allow people, such as concerned friends or relatives, to apply to the courts for the immediate removal of an individual’s firearms, or to ask a Chief Firearms Officer to suspend and review an individual’s licence to own firearms.”

For the record, can the minister clarify the Government of Nunavut’s position on this aspect of the proposed new legislation, and can he indicate what discussions he has had with his federal counterpart concerning how it would work in practice here in Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We’re not against any of those rules as long as they’re coordinated appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, the position that we have under this program just starts March 1. The position is being filled effective March 1. Those dialogues will be ongoing to get engaged with the RCMP on how to actually put this legislation into practice. We’re open to discussions with the federal government, obviously, to make sure that the intent of these dollars is allocated properly. We have already partnered with Pirurvik to “Making the Man Whole” program, I believe it’s called; “Reclaiming the Whole Man” program in partnership to work with the Pirurvik Centre.

Some of the initiatives have started to a certain degree already, but again, a lot of these programs require face-to-face interactions and it’s very restricted right now. We are looking forward, as these programs roll out, that we can increase the effectiveness as fast of possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1134 – 5(2): Public Health Orders in Arviat

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

I didn’t rise, but I’m sitting. In my member’s statement, how my constituents in Arviat have been affected to date for the implementation by the public health officer.

My question now to the minister is: what updates have been given for the public health orders that have been implemented? How has the public health

service in Arviat been affected to the knowledge of the minister? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member from far over there, from Arviat can ask questions. The Department of Health with COVID-19 in Arviat, they have worked right from the start and they have not given up, and they believe that COVID will be surpassed. The nurses and COVID-19 workers are completely staffed. The people infected have been tested, along with the people who live in their houses to make sure that it is not spreading.

They are also looking at how many tenants are in each household where COVID-19 in present. They are keeping an eye on them by the nurses in Arviat. They meet every day to discuss what they're doing in Arviat and the developments there. I spoke to one of the staff this morning on this subject. To their knowledge, we think that the spread of COVID-19 will slow down. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister. Since COVID-19 spread to Arviat, I hear from him personally, I have thanked him, I appreciate it.

He mentioned about the goals and where we're heading. Perhaps he cannot give proper answers, but I have been asked by my constituents on when you expect for

COVID-19 to end in Arviat. I am passing on the question to the minister. Mr. Speaker, when can they expect COVID-19 to disappear in Arviat? What are our expectations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you very much for asking that question, my colleague. The people who are infected with COVID-19 have been advised not to leave their home, and their fellow residents in the homes are also advised not to go out in public, and not to associate with other people outside of their homes, and to not visit and this will stop the spread of the pandemic.

The people who are currently told to remain home would finally get the chance to get out, as it would require a total of 14 days of non-infections before the sickness can be considered gone, and if residents are not going to adhere to the advice provided and continue to go outside, then they will continue to spread the COVID-19 sickness from household to household. It can go around in circles and lead to a longer battle with the pandemic. However, in order to slow it, the people who are infected who have been advised to quarantine should completely follow that advice and not go outside for any reason whatsoever. That is where we can start from.

If they were to do that, COVID-19 would stop starting today. It's possible. However, if people who are sick still go to the stores, and go outside to visit, then it will continue. The restrictions have to

apply for two whole weeks and weekends to stop the spread.

If we are to stop the spread, then I can state that we are planning right now to get more vaccines to Arviat so that all the residents of Arviat can be given vaccines. That's our goal right now, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. I heard your reference to vaccinations and I am happy to hear of that, as I prefer vaccinations although I have already been vaccinated twice now.

However, as per my earlier statement about this matter, our residents are tired and we are antsy as we are cooped up at home, and ever since the pandemic arrived in Arviat, we were required to stay home and not to visit and work. Many residents are complying with the requirement; in fact the majority. Nonetheless, we are unsure of what further to implement as we need to brainstorm in order to deal with this. The requirement not to go outside is becoming problematic as there are obstacles they face, such as the lack of adequate housing and overcrowding.

As a matter of fact, I was speaking with one of my constituents with ten people living in their household. He called me to inform me that he had caught COVID-19, and that it was present in their household, but he wondered where he could go to ensure he didn't infect his fellow residents. He called me as his MLA to ask questions, to ask if sleeping

quarters were available to not infect his family members. My only response was that there is nowhere to go. They don't know where to go. You have to stay in your house. This is just an example, Mr. Speaker.

I believe we need to do way more in terms of facilities, workers, funding specifically for Arviat in order to combat this pandemic, as I want to see an end to this sickness. Does the minister agree with me and can he respond by saying yes, more facilities, funding, and whatever should be given? We should introduce more of that in the very near future. I'm asking him.

(interpretation ends) Just for clarity, I'm asking for a commitment for increased interventions, increased resources with partners, and increased initiatives with partners to end the lockdown in Arviat as quickly as possible. Can the minister commit to this? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our colleague asked how we can ensure this pandemic ends early, and I informed him how the pandemic can be stopped. We don't necessarily need more facilities to stop this sickness. We just need to have all residents comply with the requirement to stay home.

In terms of our perspective from the Department of Health measures, the results may not be visible and we are aware that residents are getting reticent to follow this requirement. I am aware of

the tediousness, as several residents of Arviat have called me about this issue.

From our perspective, what I can state is that once the vaccinations are scheduled into the community with the secondary needles, we want to ensure we send the maximum number of vaccines in order to have every resident wishing to be vaccinated to be able to receive their shot. They require two shots, and further, there are more studies being undertaken by the manufacturers, as to whether children can receive this vaccination.

There are studies ongoing, so once we have more results related to youth and children and the available vaccines, then we would make those vaccines available to the residents of Arviat as well, so that all the children in Arviat can also be vaccinated.

These are the types of measures we are working on, and discussions continue daily with our health officials, and our colleague along with the mayor, so communications continue daily and this includes correspondence too. With regards to any advances in this front, once we find more ways to benefit the residents that can move us forward, then we will adopt new measures as they are approved.

I will not hesitate to provide any further assistance, Mr. Speaker, to the residents of Arviat to ensure this pandemic can be ended earlier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1135 – 5(2): COVID-19 Vaccinations and Travel Restrictions

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I send my regards to the people of Naujaat and Coral Harbour. It is obvious many residents are stressed out over this COVID-19 pandemic, and I provide my full support to the minister.

I also have some questions to the Minister of Health.

Now, many residents have already received their second shot, and what we want to see is to become free to travel anywhere within Nunavut and our communities. Many residents miss those days of free exchanges, and to be able to travel to southern hubs to take vacations and many people are now clamouring for more freedom which is why they were vaccinated against this virus in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, with those people who have been vaccinated twice are they now able to travel to southern gateways for example like Winnipeg in the Keewatin Region because of course we go to Winnipeg and especially in the spring we go to Winnipeg to take a break. My question to the minister is: are those people who have been vaccinated twice free to travel anywhere now? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we see people who go down to Winnipeg even though they have not been vaccinated, they do have to go to the isolation hubs

for two weeks or 14 days and I am sure that part of his question is do we still have to isolate even if we have been vaccinated twice. Nothing has changed even though you've been vaccinated twice; you still have to go through the hub. We are going to start looking at this issue once we have no more cases, but to date, even if you have been vaccinated twice, you still have to go to the isolation hub for 14 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister. Once everyone is vaccinated, we will be free to go to any destination we would like to go to. I would like to ask the department if the government has full access to the vaccines, and can everyone be vaccinated in all 25 communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From the time the vaccination started, and when the health professionals go to the communities, they try to vaccinate at least 75 percent of the population. We have had full usage of the 75 percent, and they leave a portion for the second round of vaccinations. We have been getting the vaccine on a regular basis, and once we had depleted the stock, then all the people of Nunavut should be vaccinated by then. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister. Some of the people who are vaccinated get different reactions. Once everyone is vaccinated, are we going to be able to go to any destination we would like? What about the people who do not want to be vaccinated? Is it going to become mandatory to have everybody vaccinated? There are some people who have very bad reactions and some who have respiratory problems. Reading all the documents from all over the world, it is said that there is 98 percent of the people who recover. Is it going to become mandatory to get vaccinated in order to go anywhere we want? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I indicated earlier that we would like to vaccinate everyone in Nunavut. I didn't say vaccinating the whole population. Those who do not want to vaccinate have the freedom not to. There are some people who can be vaccinated but get a bad reaction. We're not saying mandatory, anyone who wants to be vaccinated can do so, and once the majority of the population is vaccinated, then we will take the next step. Some people can't be vaccinated because of health and other reasons.

We do want to vaccinate anyone who wants to do so. Once we get the one dose, they sometimes feel intimidated or afraid to take the shot, so we invite them to call the department in order to overcome their fear. For those who missed the first round, we will still vaccinate them because we're open to

anyone who would like to get vaccinated.

Once that step is done, we will then take the next step and look at how we can start going forward, how we can start opening up hotels or isolation hubs. It's only at that time when we will be able to start talking about isolation hubs and opening public places and so on.

There are a lot of factors that we have to look at and I can't cover them all during this question period. That's our direction as a department; we're looking at vaccinating the majority of the population. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Tununiq, Mr. Qamaniq.

Question 1136 – 5(2): COVID-19 Clinics in Communities

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My regards to the people of Pond Inlet. Good day, and also to the people of Nunavut.

I would also like to direct my question to the Minister of Health. I would like to ask the Minister of Health of the Government of Nunavut's COVID-19 vaccination website, which provides a list vaccine clinics. By community it shows Arctic Bay, Clyde River, Kugluktuk, Pangnirtung, Sanirajak, and even in my riding of Pond Inlet. We do not have dates set for when the Department of Health intends on sending the vaccine clinics.

My question is why the Nunavut government is not informing these communities of an approximate date that

they may be able to receive a vaccination. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the member for his question. The vaccines are coming into Nunavut on a regular basis, but then again there are times we have an approximate date and then there's a delay because of weather and other reasons. We have given approximate dates to the communities. Within our department, we approximate at what week we will be going to a particular community, and at times it's not possible to go to the community because we cannot prepare the vaccine on that particular date because of weather.

We give priority to the communities, and I can inform the member and the listening public out there that prior to coming into a community, we will make sure that we inform them two or three days before we arrive. Usually, they charter to the community, and the nurses and the staff are all in there in order to prepare for the vaccines to be applied in a community hall or in some kind of institution. They all need waiting rooms, you can't just go in and take a shot, it has to be fully prepared with waiting rooms and other processes. You can call the nursing station and make an appointment for your vaccination. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank

the minister for his response. I would like to ask another question to the minister about how many doses of the Moderna vaccine has the federal government committed to providing Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to thank the federal government's Department of Health for providing the Moderna vaccine. We have had discussions with the provinces, and I would like to thank them because they have placed us as a priority to get the Moderna vaccine. I can't give you how many doses have been made available, but what I can say is that anyone who would like to get vaccinated will be able to get one because it could cover all of Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for responding to my question. The minister indicated that during the month of March, they will be going to the communities that I've identified earlier. The people who are vaccinated will get their second dose. The minister also indicated that they try to cover as much as 75 percent of the community population.

With the communities that I identified, for example, could you give us an approximate date as to when you are

going to the communities, like April or May? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once an individual gets vaccinated, they are told at that time at what date they will be able to return for their second dose. It has to be two or three weeks after the first dose. At their first dose, they will be informed as to what date they will have to return to get their second dose. Once you're vaccinated, there is another one waiting for you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1137 – 5(2): Vaccination Rollout Plan for Iqaluit

Mr. Lightstone (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) My questions are also for the Minister of Health, and they're also regarding the vaccination roll-out.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents have been telling me that they feel that the Government of Nunavut's communication on the vaccination roll-out plan has been lacking. I can't help but agree.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Nunavut's COVID-19 vaccination roll-out plan indicates that Nunavut has developed a vaccination strategy based on the Government of Canada's allocation of vaccine and shipping timeline.

However, as my colleague from Pond Inlet indicated, there are seven communities on this website that do not have vaccination dates, approximate dates. I myself as well as my constituents are very concerned over the lack of communication about the Government of Nunavut's vaccination rollout plan as, right now, as of today, the Government of Nunavut has yet to share the complete vaccination strategy with the public.

However, on another note, it has come to my attention that Iqalummiut over the age of 45 have been receiving phone calls from the Department of Health to book appointments for their first Moderna vaccine. Mr. Speaker, this comes as a surprise to me as the website itself also states that Iqaluit is not conducting community-wide vaccinations but is limiting the rollout to priority 1, individuals over the age of 60, and priority 2, frontline workers.

Mr. Speaker, as there has been no public announcement about the adjustments and there is no indication on the website, I would like to ask the Minister of Health if he would be able to confirm whether or not this is true. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't take questions of the previous member who was asking to be very concerned about just requesting information, Mr. Speaker. I'm more than happy to provide roughly the timeline for when the vaccinations will roll out.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many different variables in setting up vaccination rollout dates and times, and for the city of Iqaluit, they were the very first to get vaccinations. Mr. Speaker, in fact we have done over 1,100 vaccinations in this fine city so far. Right from the start there were the people in the two press releases.

The members of this fine city have been calling our public health office and booking appointments to get call-backs. They have gone through from the most vulnerable at the first stage, all the elders, emergency workers, and were done very first. Following that, they did 60 and over and then they did 55 and over, and I believe now they're calling members of Iqaluit who are 45 and over who have booked for a call back from the public health office.

We have said on more than one occasion that if members of any community are interested in getting vaccinated, they're being encouraged to call the public health office in their community and that's the same process that's happening here. The individuals who are interested in vaccinations that are 45 and over who have called Public Health are being called back to book appointments, and this will continue until everybody in Iqaluit who wants to be vaccinated is vaccinated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for confirming that the priority has been adjusted to incorporate all Iqalummiut over the age of 45. Next I would like to

ask: when was this decision made and when will the minister make a public announcement to notify all Iqalumiut of this decision and ask all who are interested over the age of 45 to call and book an appointment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will assume that Mr. Lightstone will put it on his Facebook page before the day is over.

Mr. Speaker, our office has been working very hard, the public health office here, and our COVID team in Nunavut has been working very hard to ensure that we get the vaccine out to as many people in Nunavut and Iqaluit as we can. Mr. Speaker, we will carry on. It has always been the plan of government to include everybody in Iqaluit who wants to get vaccinated that is 18 and over to get vaccinated.

Unlike a small community, Iqaluit has thousands and thousands of people. To do a mass vaccination like we're planning in Pond Inlet and Chesterfield Inlet, we would need to hold onto two or three loads of vaccinations just for the city of Iqaluit alone. We can't do a mass vaccination with the whole population of Iqaluit. It would mean we would have to do 4,000 or 5,000 at the same time. In this case of the city of Iqaluit, they have chosen to go from as the older. As I said, we are now at 45 and over and once we go through that and we find that we have some vaccines that we can use in Iqaluit, we will go to 35 and over, I assume, and work our way through.

Mr. Speaker, we ask the public and Iqalumiut to call the public health office here in Iqaluit to make their appointments. At the end of all this, sometime in March we will be doing a mass vaccination in Iqaluit where people who were not able to get vaccinated or called in to the number will have that opportunity to do so, but unfortunately I can't say exactly when that date is at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister, but it is difficult at times. Mr. Speaker, my first question was when was this decision made, and I did not get a response. My second question was when will a public announcement be made, and I didn't get a response.

It's very unfortunate that the communication about the rollout plan itself has been lacking. I'm glad that I did raise these questions today because this is the first time that we have heard that there is somewhat of a phased-in approach for the vaccination of Iqalumiut, which I guess will be conducted in different age brackets, and I will be sharing that through social media on behalf of the minister.

Now, for my last question, I would like to ask: throughout this phased rollout plan for the vaccination of Iqalumiut, do you intend to expand the priority groups beyond age groups to include those who have pre-existing health conditions or are at risk of severe

implications due to COVID-19? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's amazing how we have vaccinated over a thousand people in Iqaluit, and Mr. Lightstone didn't even know there was a vaccination happening. We are now calling all the 45-year-olds and over who have called the public health office here in Iqaluit, booking appointments to get the vaccine. The public does know, Mr. Speaker, and it is unfortunate that Mr. Lightstone didn't know, but the public seems to know. We are on top of it.

I appreciate the public health staff in Iqaluit who are working diligently, who have given up their weekends and their evenings to ensure that people in this fine city of Iqaluit are getting vaccinated and that the plan is going forward. I appreciate the hard work they are doing. I appreciate the support that we're getting from this fine city and their understanding of how the rollout is happening. I couldn't be more appreciative of the fine people in Iqaluit who understand that the smaller communities and outlying communities have been taken priority.

We will take another look at the rollout plan and see where we could tweak it to make some improvements, but we will work on that and we will go forward from there, Mr. Speaker. I'm just really glad that up to this point we have vaccinated thousands of Nunavummiut and other provinces are finally starting to vaccinate. I believe, in Newfoundland, they're going from 95 and over today,

and here we are, we are vaccinating so many Nunavummiut.

I just hope more people show up, that more people call public health offices in their community to book an appointment and, if they were not able to go on the first round, please call and we will ensure that you're covered in the second round of vaccinations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Baker Lake, Member Simailak.

Question 1138 – 5(2): Petroleum Products and Pricing

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Community and Government Services and they concern the issue of petroleum products and pricing.

As the minister will recall, the Government of Nunavut issued a news release on January 10, 2020 concerning changes to fuel prices in the territory. Further changes to fuel prices were subsequently made in April 2020.

Mr. Speaker, it is now February 2021. Can the minister confirm when she will announce this year's fuel prices? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for his question. Community and Government Services, under the Petroleum Products

Division, was able to hedge gasoline and diesel fuel and jet fuel at an overall savings of 5 percent from the 2019 prices. In January 2020 no announcement was made whether or not fuel prices would decrease or increase within Nunavut. The review of increases or decreases will come and the department is looking into it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for her response. As the minister will recall, last year's announcement by her department concerning fuel prices indicated that the world price of oil has been declining and that our government was able to provide "cost reductions to Nunavummiut" through its early purchase policies.

Can the minister update the House today on the extent to which the current world price of oil is impacting the prices that Nunavummiut pay for products like home heating fuel and gasoline? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) The Petroleum Products Division purchased 50 million litres of diesel in March 2020 and another 50 million litres of diesel in September 2020, all for delivery in 2021 at an estimated savings of \$15.6 million versus the previous year. The Petroleum Products Division

secured 100 percent of its 2021 gasoline order with 23 million litres at a savings of 12 percent versus the previous year.

International fuel markets were severely depressed at the time of the diesel purchases, but the Petroleum Products Division could not secure 100 percent of its fuel requirements without breaching our Petroleum Products Revolving Fund limit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for her response. As I noted in the preamble to my first question, the government made at least two changes to fuel prices in the 2020 calendar year. In January 2020 the price of home heating fuel in Baker Lake was set at \$1.0238 per litre. In April the price went up to \$1.0372 per litre.

Mr. Speaker, given the low world price of oil, will the minister commit to doing everything possible to ensure that my constituents are paying the lowest possible price to heat their homes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I just want the member to know that the commitment to reduce oil prices will be done by this House if Bill 54 is reviewed and passed. Until Bill 54 is reviewed and passed, we cannot work on

our fuel prices for the new year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1139 – 5(2): Chesterfield Inlet Cultural Visitor Centre

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Culture and Heritage.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019-2020 the Department of Culture and Heritage contributed almost \$254,000 to the Kivalliq Inuit Association for the construction of the Chesterfield Inlet Community Cultural Visitor Centre. The building is completed and quite beautiful, but it is not yet open.

Can the minister describe how her department has worked with the Kivalliq Inuit Association on this project and tell us when the Chesterfield Inlet Cultural Centre will be open to the public? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Culture and Heritage, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. I also thank you for that question. The Kivalliq Inuit Association has dealt with this and they applied for more funding. It has not gone through the Department of Culture and Heritage yet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Towtongie: Mr. Speaker, the people of Chesterfield Inlet are quite anxious to see this beautiful building opened and put to good use. It is my understanding that the building is designed to display a number of heritage artefacts. That's the purpose of it.

Can the minister clarify how her department will work to identify and repatriate cultural artefacts from the region that are currently being held in locations outside of Nunavut and bring them back home to the Chesterfield Inlet Cultural Centre for the community to appreciate and enjoy? Chesterfield Inlet is one of the oldest communities in Nunavut. They have a 100-year-old church and there are beautiful artefacts, and it's historical. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Culture and Heritage, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for that question. The Department of Culture and Heritage is always considering and looking at where the heritage artefacts outside of Nunavut can be repatriated, such as viewing centres. They try to work with Nunavut on where they can be repatriated and if proper storage facilities are available. This is always being looked at.

I will reiterate that the Department of Culture and Heritage provided funding to the KIA for the construction, and

that's where we stand right now to date.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank
you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister of
Culture and Heritage for her good
response. The Chesterfield Inlet Cultural
Visitor Centre is going to be an ideal
location for elders and youth to come
together for the sharing of Inuit
knowledge and culture to pass their Inuit
culture on to the next generation while
they have the opportunity on how they
can be taught.

The minister is well aware that they're
learning out of. Will the minister commit
to providing ongoing support for cultural
activities and programming at the new
Chesterfield Inlet Cultural Visitor
Centre? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you.
(interpretation ends) It's Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk
(interpretation): Thank you, Mr.
Speaker. I thank you for pointing that
out and it's true the community
anticipate this type of thing and people
who work on this list are listening right
now and they would want to work more
together with for the people of
Chesterfield Inlet on or the next steps.
We will only know we want to work
together with the people of Chesterfield
Inlet and the Department of Culture and
Heritage including her comment on what
else they can think about. Thank you,
Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you.
Oral Questions. Member for Hudson
Bay, Mr. Rumbolt.

Question 1140 – 5(2): Office Space in Sanikiluaq

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Good afternoon to the people of
Sanikiluaq and the rest of Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for
the Minister of Community and
Government Services. I want to begin by
thanking the minister for her positive
responses to the questions that I asked
yesterday. However, I have some
follow-up questions based on the
minister's responses.

Mr. Speaker, in the minister's response
to me yesterday the minister stated and I
quote "With the completion of the new
health centre the Government of
Nunavut is planning to repurpose
portions of the existing health centre to
accommodate both hamlet short-term
office space as well as GN office space."

Can the minister clarify the timeline and
estimated costs for this work? Thank
you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak: Thank you, Mr.
Speaker. I thank the member for his
question. Unfortunately I don't have a
timeline and I don't have an estimated
cost for the member, but once we have
that information I will share it with the
member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to obtaining that information. Part of the minister's quote stated they will repurpose portions of the old health centre, not the entire building.

Can the minister clarify the extent to which the municipality is involved in identifying the space requirements for this short-term solution? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the member that the department will be working with the hamlet and the Department of Community and Government Services to ensure that their office shortages and our government office shortages are addressed so that we can work together to try to resolve office space shortages. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members, you will note that... . Member Kaernek.

Motion 100 – 5(2): Extension of Question Period

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 39(7), I move that the time for question period be extended, and seconded by the member for Niaqunngu. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. There is a motion on the floor and the motion is in order and it is not debatable. All those in favour. All those opposed. The motion is carried and question period has been extended by an additional 30 minutes.

Is it okay now? I'm sorry, my colleagues. Before we proceed with the 30-minute extension to question period, we will take a 20-minute break.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House recessed at 15:31 and resumed at 15:54*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you for coming back. Oral Questions. Member for Amittuq, Member Kaernek.

Question 1141 – 5(2): Mould in Houses and Rent

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good day. In my member's statement I said that I was going to ask questions to the housing corporation minister.

Mould continues to be an issue in some of our houses and we have very old houses in Igloolik and Sanirajak. Mr. Speaker, since we started mould remediation in the older houses, I would like to ask the housing corporation about any plans on tenants who are occupying the older homes that have mould.

Do you have any plans in the future about lowering the rent, should they inhabit the older buildings that are mouldy without looking at their salary scale? Can they lower the rent scale for those individuals who are renting the

older mouldy homes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Nunavut Housing Corporation, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your question. There are cases of mould in every one of the communities because of lack of air exchange. We have access to federal funds to remediate the mould in the units.

On the subject of rent scale and about whether we can lower the rent scale should that individual renting an older mouldy unit, the local housing organizations can review the matter and see if they can adjust the rent, should the house be too old and mouldy. We deal with that on an ongoing basis, but we do assess the house that is being occupied, and then we look at where we can make adjustments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you. In regard to the Nunavut Housing Corporation, can the minister elaborate further on whether their corporation can look at the matter of lowering the rent scale should an individual be occupying an older unit that is mouldy?

There are quite a few houses in the Amittuq area that look new on the outside but very old on the inside. There is dripping, the walls are warped, and I see a lot of lack of housing.

If there's an agreement with the tenant and should that person have a respiratory problem, they get a letter from the nursing station so that they can move to another unit. Do you have any plans in lowering the rent scale? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister responsible for Nunavut Housing Corporation, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the member for asking that question. We deal with that on an ongoing basis. Should the tenant think that there should be a lowering of the rent, we review the house, we look at the condition of the house that they're occupying, and then there's a discussion between the Nunavut Housing Corporation and the local housing organization. That goes on an ongoing basis. Should they have respiratory problems and if they occupy an older unit that's mouldy, it can be discussed within the community because they know the condition of the house and they also know which houses are available that they can move into. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my last question. Mr. Speaker, I usually get correspondence from my constituents when they need help. I approach the local housing organization and nothing happens; the problem is not remediated. When there's nobody else that they can turn to, they turn to their representative.

That's how I try to represent my communities because of course we have to listen to the people out there.

As I indicated earlier, I would like to ask the Nunavut Housing Corporation to see if they can visit the Amittuq riding and look at the condition of the housing units. Can the minister ask her officials to see if they can go to the Amittuq riding to check the condition of the housing units? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for that question. I know exactly where you're coming from because there are mould cases in all of Nunavut, and the Nunavut Housing Corporation works together with the local housing organization. I will look at going to the communities to look at the conditions of the houses because of course it will have an impact on our budget. We also have to make plans on which communities we're going to be going into. I will direct my staff to work more closely with the local housing organizations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1142 – 5(2): Impacts of Bill 54, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the finance minister's

Budget Address, one of the things that kind of stood out was when he talked about what we can do and what we can achieve by working together and that sometimes we may not always agree, but the things that we can do if we work together are important.

With that in mind, I must say that I was a little aback by the Minister of CGS making a reference to Bill 54, that if it wasn't passed, then that would have complications to the questions that my colleague Mr. Simailak was asking about fuel rates.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. As the sponsoring minister of Bill 54, do you as the sponsoring minister agree with the Minister of CGS and her statement claiming that no savings on petroleum products will be passed to constituents if Bill 54 does not pass, yes or no? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to look over the *Blues* to see exactly how it was phrased, but the ramifications on whether Bill 54 goes through or not will have a substantial impact on fuel pricing in the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1143 – 5(2): Fuel Purchases

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the

Minister of Community and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Petroleum Products Division. My questions are in follow up to Member for Baker Lake.

As through the minister's response, in reply to the question, she had indicated that the delivery of the fuel for the 2021 year, the purchases were conducted 50 percent in March and 50 percent in September of 2020.

A number of months have passed since the fuel was purchased, and the minister had indicated that it was done so at a savings. I would like to ask why so much time has passed and we have yet to see an adjustment to the fuel prices? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for his question. The reason why CGS purchased a percentage of its fuel was because the ability of petroleum products to be purchased is largely influenced by the limit of the Petroleum Products Revolving Fund. The Petroleum Products Revolving Fund Act, similar to the line of credit funds are advanced to petroleum products to cover operating costs.

An example is the purchasing fuel, which is later repaid as Petroleum Products Division collects monies from the sale of fuel. The current limit of the Petroleum Products Revolving Fund is \$250 million.

The Petroleum Products Division monitors fuel markets regularly to identify advantages, fuel purchase opportunities. To date, petroleum products division has secured approximately 70 percent of the 2021 resupply season.

If the Petroleum Products Revolving Fund's limit was higher, or if more monies had been collected on fuel price arrears, Petroleum Products Division could have had secured more fuel when market prices were lower.

While Petroleum Products Division has made progress on collecting fuel sales arrears, since the last bulk fuel purchases were made, markets have rebounded slightly. Petroleum Products Division continues to monitor fuel markets daily for purchase opportunities.

I would like to, for the record, Mr. Speaker, my response to Mr. Simailak's question earlier, I would like to correct myself and say that if Bill 54 is passed, it would allow for more efficient mechanisms to deal with fuel prices. At this time, Petroleum Products Division is reviewing what will happen in the near future and whether or not fuel prices will increase or decrease. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for that very lengthy, long-winded response. I did not actually get a response to my question. As the sealift season closed, the PPD received the final shipment of the annual fuel resupply a

number of months ago. My question was: why has the PPD or the minister yet to produce a fuel price adjustment? Thank you, Madam...Mr. Chair...Mr. Speaker. Sorry.

>> *Laughter*

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

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for his question. During COVID-19 (interpretation) Inuit are going through hardship and we want to help them. (interpretation ends) We want to help our residents because during COVID there was a lot of hardship in our communities; one, people were losing their jobs; two, the mental stability of some of our residents like Arviat, being stuck at home for a hundred days now, is hard on people. We didn't want to put any more hardship on our residents if we increased our fuel prices. That's why some of the decisions were made to ensure that we did not increase our fuel prices in the fall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for her response. As the minister had previously indicated, the Petroleum Products Division and the Revolving Fund must operate in a way to recover its operating costs.

As the minister indicated, there has been no price adjustment as this would cost hardships and affect people's jobs and mental stability. It sounds like this is a COVID issue and should be funded through COVID funding and not through an amendment to the legislation to allow the Petroleum Products Division to carry over a deficit into a future year, which will then eventually also have to be paid by exact same people that they are trying to help out today.

My last question is I would like to ask the minister to clarify her statement. Was there no fuel price adjustment due to COVID implications? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for his question. I guess you can say yes. The reasons for no increases to fuel prices were due to COVID. I mean, your recommendation that maybe the funding should come from COVID, I will speak with my colleagues and see what can be done to help our fuel price and our adjusting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1144 – 5(2): Caribou Population on Southampton Island

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our caribou expert isn't here, so I'll take over for him.

>> *Laughter*

I'm from Coral Harbour and we're on an island. Four times now or perhaps twice this past fall, I went fishing at quite a distance away. We often used to find caribou in the area, but I have been told more and more by hunters and elders and from women too that people feel the caribou population has been lowering.

I have endeavoured to check myself, travelling to the east and to the west, to see the health of the caribou and also having caribou tags personally, I wanted to hunt. I can say now that we can have concerns about our caribou. I would like to ask the minister what preparations are in place with respect to survey on the island of Coral Harbour. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Environment, Mr. Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The survey was conducted back when on the island of Southampton in 2020, the Nunavut Wildlife Board determined the quota, and the 1,600 figure was given and it was accepted by the community of Coral Harbour. The hunters and trappers association on their own decided to reduce their quota. To date, we have a quota of 1,000 caribou in Coral Harbour. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Netsier (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Premier for his response. There are concerns in our community in regard to these. Are there

any plans with the Department of Environment to conduct a survey in the very close future? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Environment, Mr. Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, we have not considered it yet. 2020 was the year the survey was conducted, so we have not made any plans towards that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your final supplementary, Mr. Netsier.

Mr. Netsier (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to urge a survey of our caribou population in the near future. Some people are saying there are a lot of caribou and some people are saying there is not. I think a survey would be prudent for further consideration. Can the minister perhaps delegate his staff to have an earlier survey of the caribou population? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Environment, Mr. Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Caribou survey was postponed by a year. A survey was scheduled for 2020, the caribou survey was to be done between Baker Lake and Naujaat, but it was not conducted due to the COVID-19 pandemic measures. The Department of Environment will be working on for 2021, but at the moment we are not able to ahead with the survey. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. MLA for Tununiq, Mr. Qamaniq.

Question 1145 – 5(2): Issues with Medical Boarding

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for acknowledging me again for questions. I have a question to the Minister of Health. The person who often asks questions is not here, so I'll take his shoes.

When Tammaativvik is completely full of patients and often they have to go to Frobisher Inn, Discovery, Capital Suites, or Aqsarniit Hotel, some of the medical escorts who come here often don't have any income and they need support elsewhere.

Unlike government employees, when they are escorts, when Tammaativvik is at full capacity, they're told that they can't eat there or have meals there so often they go hungry. Perhaps is it because they are unable to have meals? Are they told by the staff at Tammaativvik that they are unable to eat there? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for asking a question about that. I was visiting Tammaativvik just recently. Those who have to be outside of the boarding home are often booked to be in the hotels, but my understanding is that if they want to go for meals at Tammaativvik, those who are in hotels are compensated for any expense they

may have, such as meals, and those who cannot be at the boarding home are able to go there for meals. That's my understanding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for his response. The same individuals who want to be picked up sometimes don't want to be picked up. As the minister, can you look further into what remedies may be made? As you mentioned, if you're not employed, they have to be cared for a little closer and they need meals. They may need to buy a boarding home vehicle. I'm referring to those who are in hotels. They go through difficulties. Can we perhaps probe into this further? I think that as Nunavut residents, we would be very appreciative of this move. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make everybody appreciative. Yes, I will look into it and further, on problems related to boarding homes, sometimes it is lack of information people have, but they are always able to call the office or check up on me.

These are problems, yes. When you're in a difficult situation, it's a serious issue and I'll look further into this and what better arrangements we can have because we want to be more welcoming to elders and those who are in need. Yes, I will look further into this and what

better accommodation we can make. When people go through difficulties, we don't want them to go through more difficulties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for responding appropriately to my questions, especially for the elderly who cannot speak English. With the drivers who speak English only, they try to talk to them, but the drivers can't understand them. I'm well aware that it's the contractor's responsibility in hiring their staff. If drivers in the future can be replaced by Inuktitut-speaking drivers in the future, can he also look into that when he's looking into the other areas? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When tenders for RFPs are issued, for example, when we're looking for accommodations, people who can speak Inuktitut, there should be somebody there, from drivers, to cleaners, to the cooks. I'll tell my staff to look into those also. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members will note that the time for question period has expired. We will proceed to Item 7. I'm sorry. We will go to Item 8. Written Questions. No. 9. Returns to Written Questions. No. 10. Replies to Opening Address. No. 11. Replies to Budget Address. No. 12. Petitions. 13. Responses to Petitions.

No. 14. (interpretation ends) Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. (interpretation) No. 15. Tabling of Documents. (interpretation ends) Tabling of Documents. (interpretation) I will table these documents.

Item 15: Tabling of Documents

Tabled Document 343 – 5(2): Interim Directive on Travel and Child Care Entitlements

(interpretation ends) I am tabling the Interim Directive on Members' Travel and Child Care Entitlements issued by the Management and Services Board in accordance with the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*. (interpretation) Thank you.

(interpretation ends) Tabling of Documents. (interpretation) No. 16. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions. (interpretation) Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towtongie.

Item 16: Notices of Motions

Motion 101 – 5(2): Extension of Review Period for Bill 53, An Act to Amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act – Notice

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, February 25, 2021, I will move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Hudson Bay, that the period of time for the standing committee to report Bill 53 back to the House be extended by a further 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towntongie.

Motion 102 – 5(2): Extension of Review Period for Bill 54, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act – Notice

Ms. Towntongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, February 25, 2021, I will move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Hudson Bay, that the period of time for the standing committee to report Bill 54 back to the House be extended by a further 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions. (interpretation) Continuing on. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. Minister of Finance, Mr. Hickes.

Item 17: Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills

Bill 60 – Supplementary Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, No. 2, 2020-2021 – Notice

Bill 61 – Supplementary Appropriation (Capital) Act, No. 2, 2020-2021 – Notice

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Wednesday, February 24, 2021, that Bill 60, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 2, 2020-2021*, and Bill 61, *Supplementary Appropriation (Capital)*

Act, No. 2, 2020-2021, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Bill 62 – An Act to Amend the Judicature Act – Notice

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Wednesday, February 24, 2021, that Bill 62, *An Act to Amend the Judicature Act*, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeegok.

Bill 63 – An Act to Amend the Traffic and Safety Act – Notice

Hon. David Akeegok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I give notice that on Wednesday, February 24, 2021, that Bill 63, *An Act to Amend the Traffic and Safety Act*, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Business... (interpretation) I'm sorry.

I'm sorry. Minister responsible for the (interpretation ends) Nunavut Business Credit Corporation, Minister Akeegok.

Bill 64 – An Act to Amend the Nunavut Business Credit Corporation Act – Notice

Hon. David Akeegok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Wednesday, February 24, 2021, that Bill 64, *An Act to Amend the Nunavut Business Credit Corporation Act*, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. Minister of Family Services, Ms. Sheutiapik.

Bill 65 – Apprenticeship and Certification Act – Notice

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Annie, this one is for you. (interpretation) We don't thank each other enough. I will be mentioning names. Thank you.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to give notice that on Wednesday, February 24, 2021, that Bill 65, *Apprenticeship and Certification Act*, will be read for the first time. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. (interpretation) No. 18. (interpretation ends) Motions. (interpretation) No. 19. (interpretation ends) First Reading of Bills. Minister of Finance, Mr. Hickes.

Item 19: First Reading of Bills**Bill 59 – Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, 2021-2022 – First Reading**

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Arviat South, that Bill 59, *Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, 2021-2022*, be now read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) The motion is in order. To the motion.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Speaker (interpretation): All those in favour. The motion is carried.

(interpretation ends) First Reading of Bills. 20. Second Reading of Bills. Minister of Finance, Mr. Hickes.

Item 20: Second Reading of Bills**Bill 59 – Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, 2021-2022 – Second Reading**

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Arviat South, that Bill 59, *Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, 2021-2022*, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill authorizes the Government of Nunavut to make operations and maintenance expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 21, 2022. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Speaker (interpretation): All those in favour. All those opposed. The motion is carried and Bill 59 is referred to the Committee of the Whole.

(interpretation ends) Second Reading of Bills. (interpretation) Continuing on. 21. (interpretation ends) Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Bill 59 with Mr. Rumbolt in the Chair.

Before we proceed with the Committee of the Whole, we will take five minutes.

(interpretation) Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House recessed at 16:35 and Committee resumed at 16:46*

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

Chairman (Mr. Rumbolt): Good afternoon. I would like to call the committee meeting to order, please. Thank you. In Committee of the Whole we have the following item to deal with: Bill 59. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We wish to commence with Bill 59 and start with the review of the 2021-22 main estimates for the Department of Health. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Akoak. Are we in agreement that we first deal with Bill 59?

Some Members: Agreed.

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

Chairman: Thank you. I would now like to ask Minister Kusugak: do you have officials that you would like to appear before the committee? Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Does the committee agree for the officials to appear before you?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. For the record, Minister Kusugak, please introduce your officials and proceed to your opening comments. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members. Mr. Chairman, today with me are my Deputy Minister Ruby Brown to my left and Executive Director of Corporate Services Greg Babstock to my right.

I am pleased to present the Department of Health's main estimates for fiscal year 2021-22. The Department of Health proposes a budget of \$47.1 million. This represents an increase of \$2.19 million, or approximately one-half of a percentage point from last fiscal year. It

includes the creation of 28 new positions, with a net increase of 23.5 person years.

Mr. Chairman, as in prior years, the department embraces the commitment and priorities set out in *Turaaqtavut*. Through Inuusivut, the department's focus will be on the enhancement of health care services for all Nunavummiut and the continued promotion of healthy communities. As we all are fully aware, actions to combat the introduction and spread of COVID-19 within Nunavut have dominated the agenda within the Department of Health, along with other health jurisdictions across the globe, over the past year. The department, along with other Government of Nunavut and federal government partners, is prepared and remains fully engaged in the ongoing protection of Nunavummiut from the health impacts of the coronavirus pandemic through the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Health's 2021-22 budget proposal includes financial commitments by this government to support operational growth and essential contractual obligations within health care service delivery, enable the final phase of enhancements to frontline staff capacity at the Qikiqtani General Hospital, and to facilitate the establishment of the COVID-19 Response Secretariat.

Provision of Health Care Services

The Department of Health is continually seeking new ways to improve access to and the provision of health care services for Nunavummiut. For fiscal year 2021-22, Health is requesting continued

support for the following health care initiatives.

Colorectal Cancer Screening Program

Representing a significant enhancement in preventative cancer care delivery within Nunavut, the Department of Health is requesting \$1,161,000 in fiscal year 2021-22 to permit the establishment of a new organized colorectal cancer screening program that is both cost-effective and will reduce the number of colorectal cancer cases through early detection, ultimately resulting in Nunavummiut lives saved. To implement this program, three new Iqaluit-based full-time employees are required in the 2021-22 fiscal year in addition to supplementary contract services, program operational costs, as well as the expense of actual screening diagnostic testing. These positions include the program manager, the regional clinical pathway coordinator, and an administrative assistant.

Iqaluit Health Services Capacity Growth

Mr. Chairman, begun in fiscal year 2019-2020, Iqaluit Health Services is proposing to move to the final stage of a three-year targeted capacity programming enhancement comprising the hire of 10 new total person years. To complete this initiative, Health is requesting \$405,000 in fiscal year 2021-22 to fund four new person years at Iqaluit Health Services, including a CAT scan technician, a housekeeper, one public health nurse, and one registered nurse.

Territorial Pharmacy Management Realignment

Nunavut's health care system requires the expertise of a pharmacist to provide the Pharmacy Services Division permanent, director-level leadership and management territory-wide. To enhance the pharmacy services being provided to Nunavummiut, Health sought and obtained the permission from cabinet to execute a realignment within the Pharmacy Services Division with the creation of a territorial director of pharmacy services and hospital clinical pharmacist positions, both located in Iqaluit. All existing pharmacy positions across the territory would align under the new territorial director in one division.

The two new positions will be re-profiled from existing positions identified as surplus, and as such, Health is requesting \$147,000 per year in additional budget to fund the incremental salary cost.

GN Pandemic Response Secretariat

The Government of Nunavut took immediate action in response to COVID-19 by declaring a public health emergency on March 18, 2020 and introducing measures to reduce the spread of the virus.

To ensure and sustain an effective, coordinated and timely pandemic response, the Government of Nunavut requires dedicated teams to provide the necessary capacity, leadership, and guidance to meet emergent challenges brought about by COVID-19. Appropriately resourced and structured teams will be best suited to quickly

adapt and respond to the often unique and changing needs of Nunavummiut.

The Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs and Health proposed and received from cabinet the approval for the creation of the Pandemic Response Secretariat. To effectively plan, prepare, and sustain a pandemic response in Nunavut, Health is requesting approval of \$2.34 million to fund the creation of 21 term positions in addition to some operating and maintenance funding.

Uncontrollable Cost Budget Allocation

The department has been managing budgetary allocations in some program areas that are insufficient as a result of increasing and uncontrollable health care delivery costs. Operational growth and increasing consumption of health care services has also shown the need to financially support several of Health's existing contractual arrangements with health care provider partners.

To address these key shortfalls, Health is requesting an additional \$18,137,000 for the following uncontrollable health care delivery expense categories:

- Physician services contracts at \$3,006,000
- Out-of-territory mental health and addictions treatment at \$10,626,000
- Community health centre security contracts at \$1,790,000
- Ottawa Health Services Network Incorporated (OSHNI) contract at \$1,571,000
- Ottawa Hospital and Region Imaging Associates (OHRIA) contract at \$1,144,000

The department has been in discussions with Indigenous Services Canada with respect to the annual Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) contribution agreement, and specifically the reimbursement of the air travel expenses for eligible Nunavummiut. As a result of these negotiations, the co-payment per instance of eligible travel increased from \$125 per one-way flight segment to \$715. This represents a notional \$20 million increase to the value of the Non-Insured Health Benefits contribution agreement represented in the departmental Vote 4/5 budget.

Should I carry on, Mr. Chairman?

As such, the travel programs budget in Vote 1 has been correspondingly reduced by \$20 million, reflective of the increased third party funding being received from the federal government for NIHB.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, a continuing priority for the Department of Health in the coming year and beyond is to promote and foster the well-being of all Nunavummiut and help to nurture healthy and vibrant communities. It is always important to recognize the advances made by Department of Health staff on behalf of all Nunavummiut, especially so in navigating the territory through the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Our aim is to continue to build a well-governed, integrated, collaborative health care system that is innovative and responsive to the needs of Nunavummiut. The department envisions a health care system that embraces Inuit societal values and

empowers Nunavummiut to live healthy lives.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my opening comments, and we can take questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Does the chair of the standing committee have opening comments? Ms. Angnakak, please go ahead.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, everyone.

Mr. Chairman, before I begin my comments on the Department of Health's proposed budget for 2021-22, on behalf of the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Wellness, I would like to commend and thank Nunavut's health care workers and staff, those on the frontlines, those working in support and administration roles, as well as the managers and directors, for their tremendous effort and dedication throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been many challenges over the past 12 months and I believe that all Members of the Legislative Assembly recognize and appreciate the incredible efforts that have been made towards meeting those challenges and the ongoing work to keep Nunavut's residents as safe and healthy as possible, so we would like to thank you.

Mr. Chairman, the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Wellness have reviewed the 2021-22 main estimates and business plan of the Department of Health. The proposed 2021-22 operations and maintenance budget for the Department of Health is just over \$471 million, which is a relatively small increase from the budget

allocated for 2020-21 as compared to other years. Historically the Department of Health has regularly incurred costs over and above its projected budgets and every year supplementary appropriation requests have been brought forward to cover budget shortfalls in various different service areas, and especially for medical travel.

The standing committee is very pleased to note the department's progress towards negotiating more realistic reimbursement amounts for the actual costs of medical travel under the federal government's Non-Insured Health Benefits contribution agreement. The Minister of Health and his predecessors have lobbied long and hard to have the federal government recognize its fiduciary obligations to meet Nunavut's needs in this area. The committee strongly supports the minister and his officials in their ongoing negotiation efforts.

Mr. Chairman, the standing committee notes with some concern that the department is once again proposing an increase in staffing positions. Currently 45 percent of the department's positions are vacant and there is a heavy reliance on casuals and relief staff, even at the management level. Members have been given to understand that a number of vacant positions have been re-profiled to address current staffing needs. The committee encourages the department to give further consideration to reviewing long-standing vacancies before creating additional positions. While members recognize that there are challenges in filling such professional health care positions as nurses and midwives at the best of times and even more so during the current pandemic, the committee

feels that more could be done to make working in Nunavut a more desirable employment option for health care professionals.

The standing committee strongly encourages the minister and his officials to give greater consideration to offering more comprehensive remuneration packages to full-time, permanent health care professionals. Committee members have been given to understand that a number of health professionals prefer to work on short-term contracts, and encourage departmental officials to work with their counterparts at the Department of Human Resources to explore options, including job sharing, additional benefits, and competitive salaries to encourage longer term commitments from employees.

Mr. Chairman, as Members of the Legislative Assembly, we are all called upon from time to time to assist our constituents in resolving concerns or issues relating to health services for themselves or their family members. The Office of Patient Relations plays an important role in addressing those issues as they occur.

Members would appreciate receiving reports summarizing the activities of the Office of Patient Relations, including information on any systemic issues that have been identified and updates on processes and procedures that are followed to resolve different types of issues.

The standing committee welcomes departmental initiatives which will focus on providing more services at home in Nunavut. It has been noted that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there

is a greater reliance on virtual technologies and such systems as telehealth to provide certain health services to Nunavut residents within the territory. Members look forward to receiving additional information on initiatives in this area.

The Department of Health has been working towards providing more long-term care beds within the territory so that fewer of our elders will have to leave home to receive the level of care they need. During our fall sitting, this Assembly voted to approve capital funds for a new seniors' long-term care facility in Rankin Inlet.

Mr. Chairman, there are many aspects of elder care in Nunavut that require investment and effort. During his appearance before the standing committee to review his department's 2021-22 draft main estimates and business plan, members were pleased to hear the minister indicate his support of ongoing community-based services for elders. The standing committee encourages the minister to bring forward a comprehensive elders strategy which will take into account and enhance supports and services that are provided to elders in communities outside of the regional centres.

Mr. Chairman, the standing committee appreciates that the minister and his officials have been working tirelessly with federal counterparts to address the COVID-19 pandemic across the territory. However, it is important that initiatives to address communicable diseases, including tuberculosis, not be left behind. In addition, services for mental health issues, addictions, and

substance abuse are desperately needed across Nunavut.

The standing committee encourages the minister to work closely with such entities as the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated to access the additional resources which have been identified to address specific health care needs across the territory.

Training and certifying Nunavummiut to work as service providers must be a priority of our government. Standing committee members continue to encourage the minister and his staff in their ongoing efforts to explore opportunities for Inuit to receive training within such fields as mental health, counselling for specific health issues such as cancer and addictions, as well as elder and long-term care. The committee again urges the minister to work closely with his counterpart, who is responsible for Nunavut Arctic College, to enhance health career training and certification options for Nunavummiut.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my opening remarks. I anticipate that individual members will also have questions and comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Angnakak. I will now open up the floor to general comments and first I will go to Mr. Main from Arviat. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for recognizing me. I also thank the minister.

(interpretation ends) Looking at the opening comments from the minister, I

have a few brief comments to make. I mean, first of all, the contributions or the efforts that have been made in terms of pandemic response in Nunavut have been very challenging, I think, for the department as well as for communities.

From where I sit, I'm very appreciative of all the efforts and resources that have been allocated to the COVID response. Unfortunately it doesn't look like the pandemic is going to end in the short term and so it's a question of us learning how to live with COVID in terms of going through isolation hubs, in terms of following public health orders and changing our behaviour at the community level.

I am concerned about the potential for burnout among the staff on the ground here in Arviat, for example, but also other staff within the Department of Health as a result of pandemic stresses, so I would like to make that comment and that we have to keep in mind the well-being of the employees within the Department of Health.

It has been a long concern of mine in terms of the staffing at the community level, the department's ability to retain the health professionals that they hire. I would appreciate if we were able to obtain information indicators that would give MLAs an understanding of whether retention of health professionals is improving, whether it is a challenge, or whether it's status quo or whether it's getting worse, for example.

I notice in the opening comments that there are a number of different initiatives: the cancer screening program, I'm fully in support of that; the Iqaluit Health Services capacity growth;

and the pharmacy initiative. The common string I see between all three of those initiatives is that they involve new positions placed in Iqaluit. I do understand that those are services that will not just apply to that one community, but I am anticipating, or maybe not anticipating, but I would love to see a targeted capacity programming enhancement for my constituency. For at the community level that sounds like a very well-thought-out initiative to enhance your programming and I would question: when was the last time that community-level programming enhancements were implemented?

It's not necessarily a zero sum game where Iqaluit gets some staff, and in order for Arviat to get increased staff we have to take them away from Iqaluit, but I think the expectation from my constituents is that the programming services that are on offer at the community level should be continually improving along with the rest of the health care system and that's what we would like to see.

(interpretation) Mr. Chairman, I don't anything further to add, but I do want to touch up on the subject of elder care facilities. I'm looking at the smaller communities that would like to get involved in the care of elders and their facilities because they have to. All communities have to be properly cared for. There are 25 communities in the territory of Nunavut.

In the Northwest Territories, the NWT government through the media just opened an elder facility with nine beds. That is what I heard on the news. When I heard that I was very envious that they were to provide that type of service and

they are establishing elder facilities in the smaller communities.

We have to look at Nunavut and look at how we can establish long-term care facilities in the smaller communities and those are a major concern of mine. I have made statements in the House on that subject and I am hoping that in the coming years that we will see the establishment of long-term care facilities in the smaller communities.

The Department of Health has indicated that they would like to provide better services to the elders which I am very pleased to see and that I fully support and I am further urging the government to look at the elders and to have them in their home communities without being sent to anywhere to the regions or to outside of the territory. I will leave it at that, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good evening minister and officials. I would like to mirror what the Chair of the Committee had indicated in the opening comments. Every year the Chair of the Standing Committee has repeatedly raised concerns over the high number of transient agency and casual staff while vacancy rates for indeterminate employee positions remain high. I believe that it is somewhat of an understatement.

Actually I have grave concern over the high vacancy rates and turnover within the Department of Health itself and more specifically the impact that it may have on our health care system.

The capacity rate in the Department of Health has remained stagnant at about 55 percent, meaning 45 percent of the positions were vacant over the last three years in the life of our Assembly.

In addition to that, the executive positions, those identified in the accounting structure chart the first page of the main estimates of the document for the Department of Health. Those positions have seen a complete turnover throughout the life of this Assembly. Further, the capacity level at the senior management level, the directors, has hovered between 60 and 70 percent over the last three years and it's now at 58 percent.

The standing committees and Members of this Assembly have raised their concern over the high vacancy rate in the Department of Health for years, and it has been customary for the minister to make commitments to address this matter. Given the life remaining in this Assembly, I'm not requesting any commitments to be made by the minister as we only have months left. I would just like to further highlight the issue.

In addition to the capacity levels in the Department of Health, there's also the reliance on casuals. The Department of Health, over the last three years, has hovered around 400 casual employees in the department, roughly half of the GN's casuals. Further, the Department of Health has also had roughly 500 relief staff to assist in filling those vacant positions. I cannot underline or stress enough how this turnover and lack of capacity in full-time, indeterminate employees and long-term employees must have on our health care system.

With that being said, I just hope that the Department of Health, going forward and looking in to next year when it's before the next Assembly, will have some more positive performance in addressing the capacity issues. I would like to wish the Department of Health the best of luck over the next 12 months in achieving the competitive job advertisements necessary to fill those capacity shortfalls.

Given the high vacancy rate at the senior management level, the directors and those responsible for filling these job advertisements, I would like to encourage the Department of Health to consider reaching out to the Department of Human Resources for assistance in helping these senior managers to fill these positions and get the required paperwork done to create the job competitions.

Again, I would like to thank the minister for his appearance and his officials. I do not expect a response; I just hope next year that we will see some solid improvement in the area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Lightstone. Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My comment would be on page 2 of your comments, hon. minister. I'm happy to see that there is preventative cancer care delivery. However, my concern is with the patients with kidney dialysis. On CBC radio I just saw news that a Nunavut Inuk lady was asking the Government of Nunavut to push hard for a kidney

dialysis machine to be in Nunavut. It's my first comment.

Secondly, going to hospitals out of the Nunavut territory, the meals benefit, Non-Insured Health Benefits for meals, is way below First Nations cost of meals. I would like to see where we could see that because it's one of the key shortfalls. I'm wondering where it would show up, but I would like the minister and his staff to realize that the breakfast, lunch, and supper, sometimes Inuit patients have to pay out of their own pockets most of the days that they are down in the hospital, so those are the travel vouchers I am talking about.

Those are my final questions, (interpretation) I mean (interpretation ends) my final comments, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation) That is it.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Towtongie. I have no more names for comments so I will ask members to move to the main estimates of 2021-22 main estimates and I will ask you to go to page H-4, which is Public Health.

I want to remind members that we are dealing with the O&M budgets, operations and maintenance budget and I will not allow any questions on capital projects unless you can directly quote it on something the minister has written or the business plan. So keep that in mind please.

Again page H-4. Directorate. Are there any questions?

Oh, sorry I didn't see Mr. Main's hand. Go ahead, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Well, that is okay, my hand is technically here in Arviat, so it is pretty hard for you to see it.

The first question I have is on the, looking at page 148 of the business plan, they... Both the ADM programs and standards has seen a budget increase and the ADM operations is seeing also an increase of over a \$1 million. I am pretty sure that some of those were explained in the opening comments, but if the minister could clarify what those two increases under the two ADM items, what they are? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Kusugak

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the question. Those are directly attributed to the COVID-19 Secretariat, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) So these are the COVID-19 Secretariat related increases, so what is the shelf life of that COVID-19 Secretariat? Is it going to be existing indefinitely, or is it just year-by-year that these increase amounts will be seen year after year, or is it just for this upcoming fiscal year? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Kusugak

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The plan as of right now is to go through two fiscal years, to end March 2023. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) And also under the Pandemic Response Secretariat, it mentions on the minister's opening comments on page 4, it mentions 21 term positions will be created. Where are those term positions going to be located? And the reason I ask is that depending where the jobs are, it may be hard to fill them and hard to provide housing depending on the geographical location in Nunavut. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Kusugak

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The secretariat and the positions will be located in Iqaluit, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) All the positions will be located in Iqaluit, 21 term positions. What is the timeline for posting these positions and getting them hired, getting them filled? Again, we get into the discussion around human resources and vacancy rates, etcetera. (interpretation) When are the initiatives taken to fill the vacant positions? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some of the positions are already filled, some of them are just going through the staffing process, and some of them are just getting in. We've gone from some of them are already filled and some of them are being brought in to staffing. Some of them are already out, positions, and then some of the positions are going out for competition as soon as the positions are able to be put out after they clear the job ads and things, if that makes sense. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) My final question on this pandemic response secretariat is; the minister mentioned the positions are located in Iqaluit, and would these be people who would travel across the territory or travel to different communities when there are COVID outbreaks, or are they simply going to be located in Iqaluit and they don't have any travel associated with it?

The reason I ask is at the end of the day when you're dealing with an outbreak, you need people on the ground here and Arviat, for example. Whether they would be traveling positions or whether they're stationary is my question. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Main. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My colleagues can appreciate that we're just going through this whole process right now. With this new secretariat and these positions being created, some of them will require travel at some point and some of them will not require any. There's some positions that are dealing with things such as the managing the isolation hubs or outbreaks. There will be some travel associated with it. At this point, I just can't give you an example of which ones would be stationary and which ones would require travel.

I think as this secretariat moves forward and begins to build capacity and evolves, we'll find that sometimes there may be travel required of those positions, but at its infancy, I can't describe which ones those are.

As this evolves, as we get more detail in terms of what positions will be required to travel in-territory or outside territory, I would be more than happy to provide that information at a time when it's more sufficiently available.

I'm sure some of them will be required to travel; I just couldn't clarify at this early stage which ones they would be. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Mr. Main, you were completed? You have any other questions? Thank you. Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have a lot of questions in this area, but I do want to just find a little bit more about human resources. I understand that the Department of Health uses a different system than the

regular human resources, than the rest of the government does. I would just like to understand more why that is? That's my first question. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Angnakak. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe that there are a few government departments also that have their own human resources departments. I think that if all the departments were under one umbrella, it would be quite overwhelming, but because Health has such a high number of employees under the department itself and some of the jobs are very specified for the professional nursing and doctor areas, we do have our own arm's-length human resources department, but nonetheless we work very closely with the human resources department when it comes to HR work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you. When it comes to hiring nurses and that, we often hear how difficult it is and I guess especially now with the pandemic, it makes it that much more challenging. How is the department doing with getting the people that we need and what kinds of things... ?

I mean, I mentioned in my opening comments that we felt that the department needs to be maybe more competitive. I know that there were instances before with salaries, that ours were actually lower than the ones in Ontario, and that's not a very good point to even start at. I'm just wondering: as a department, where are you going with

this and what's being done so that we get the personnel that we need and we can be much more competitive? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Angnakak. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Mr. Chairman, when I got into this position, I came here after having been with Human Resources, and we had a very frank discussion, I believe, with our team. Some of them are with me today, but we had a very frank discussion about the need to improve, not so much improve the hire but increase the hire and attract those nursing staff and other health care professionals to want to work here and be in long-term contracts.

It is a struggle. We are competing with the rest of Canada and the days of working in the Arctic under the northern lights, that romance is kind of gone now, and reality sets in and it's getting harder to recruit nurses across this country. We are planning to sit down and have a frank discussion and take a look at our nursing strategy and do some intake and exit surveys within nursing and see how we could attract more.

We have nurses that are on long-term contracts that are up here, some of the best nurses in this world, and then we have some really great nurses that are on contract that fly in and out and it becomes very difficult to deal with those two different parameters of great nurses. We're having that discussion as we speak. We've had a couple of discussions already within our department to talk about recruiting nurses but retention of nurses. It's very important.

We're getting a lot of good nurses coming out of our Nursing Program, for example. We're getting that success right there, but we need to retain them as well. There are challenges for nurses within Nunavut. It is a challenge and I think we're up to it. I think our department is up to working to retain nurses. If it means we need to take a different look at how we do it from the previous 20 years, then that's what we have to do, but it has to start yesterday, though, and I believe we're up to that challenge.

We still have a long way to go within this government and I would like us to set something so that it will bring it forward to the next governments coming. Mr. Lightstone mentioned that we don't have much time left, but I think we have enough time to set a good framework, as he mentioned, that can be carried on in the coming years and not the "We will look into it" attitude. Let us start that discussion. Let us put some real foundation in our employment ideas and protocol and procedures so that we are able to not just get nurses but retain them long term. That's our goal, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you. Thank you for your response. Over the years I have spoken with people who work at the hospital or in the Department of Health, and more than once it has come up to me that some people have family in the south, so they would like to be able to travel back and forth every few months and they wanted to split their position with somebody else, but this one person left because they were not allowed to do

that. I thought that was a real shame, and maybe now the department has gone forward and is now allowing that kind of thing, but a couple of years ago somehow it was frowned upon. I would like to encourage the department to be as flexible as we can because, like you say, it's very hard to hire nurses and most of the nurses that we have and that are very hard working and we're really privileged to have them to care for us here.

What do you feel or what is the reason why most nurses leave? Is there kind of like a common theme about why we can't keep nurses or interested doctors to come for more rotations and is it a problem that we can address or is it something that's out of our control? I'm just trying to get a better feel about the hiring of nurses and doctors. We say that everybody else wants them, but when we do get them here, what is it that makes them want to leave? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Angnakak. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Mr. Chairman, I don't think there is any one real reason. I think the north is for anybody, but it's not for everybody. For a lot of people, it's fine to live up here in many of the isolated communities and nurses for years, but all nurses have ambitions just like any other opportunity and they go for it. I think it's important that we do some exit surveys and take a look at those things.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the things that we will have to do is do more exit surveys and find out those very answers and those very reasons, some of them, I'm sure, we could deal with, but some

of them are personal and we wouldn't be able to solve them, but it's something that I would like to get a good grasp on also.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the things that comes to mind, I guess if I was a nurse coming from the south, would be my safety because you don't know what you're coming into. We certainly had issues and concerns raised over security at health centres. I know that that was very difficult and challenging for the department to address, so if you can give me an idea of where you're at with that now. Does every health centre have security in place now? Are the instances where security required going up or down or staying the same? If you can give us a better understanding of that area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Angnakak. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a sad day when you need to have security in a health centre, but unfortunately that's the reality and most of the health centres have them. I couldn't say most, but a lot of them have them and it's for the safety of the nurse and the patients themselves and for everybody, even the person that the security is needed for. We have a lot of people out there who do need help.

Unfortunately we need security, but it is growing in communities. As communities find out that other communities have security services where we need to get them, so instead of

spending money on health care, we're spending money on security for health care. It is a trend and I could see the day coming where every community will have it.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. If you could acknowledge when you're finished speaking, it would be great. Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you. I would like to raise an issue that I have not been successful at all as MLA, but I know that people in the communities want it, but the government has not been interested and looking at the short number of months that we have in our terms, I will say it again if I won't be able to do anything about it again.

As the minister knows, in the past we used to have a health board and people felt that they had a say and they had a director or somebody who sat on the board that represented them. It was much more of a direct representation. A couple of years ago I went around to different organizations like NAM and that and asked them, "Is it just in my mind that I want this, or what's the interest?" There's a lot of interest out there. Some boards passed resolutions saying that they would support something like that. I have brought this up and I have been MLA almost eight years now, and every year I bring this up and every year I don't get anywhere.

You're the new minister. You lived in Nunavut all your life. You understand how the past was when people had more say. I think that makes a difference and I still believe that people want that, but as an MLA on this side, as a regular MLA, I have no way of knowing how to ever

make this forward because the department has been so against it. I know the previous minister had said that he could do, what do you call those, not a full board but like give advice, an advisory board, but it's just creating a board that has no power and I don't think people want that. I think people want to be taken seriously.

I just wanted to put it in your ear that I really feel that that is a good thing and it makes people feel more involved and in charge of their own health care and it's a way of that kind of connection. I won't even ask you. I'm just saying it because I don't think it will really go anywhere anyway, but I did want to put it out there that I still think that's a really important thing to think about for the department.

When you come to issues like elder care that we have all been very concerned about, it would have been great to have a health board there in place to really discuss this and to see where it can go and what needs to happen instead of a government department just doing that on their own. I'm just using that as an example. I really believe that's needed. We need more community connection when it comes to our health care. That's it. Thank you. No more questions.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Angnakak. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you bringing that up. I was working for a regional Inuit association when the government of the day at that time decided to do away with the regional health boards, and we sat there and we literally scratched our heads and wondered why. I always think that there is a purpose for these boards.

That's why they were created. I was glad to find out that they didn't get rid of the Nunavut Association of Municipalities at the time, and it's a very worthwhile board.

I can't look into it this week, but it's definitely on my radar. I will get our department to take a look at what documents do we have in terms of the roles and responsibilities of the regional health boards of that time and what kind of authority and powers they had and take a look at it because I do agree, I agree that if there is an opportunity for the public to have a say and go to, it can't be a bad thing. They could just give you advice and I'm for that.

I think that sometimes in all departments we might get into a tunnel vision kind of thinking, and we have the public out there giving advice on ideas. If it's any department, then that can't be a bad thing. It would only be advice. I agree with you and I will take a look at where we are on that front. I'll give you that much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Kusugak. Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move a motion to report progress. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Akoak. There's a motion on the floor to report progress and the motion is not debatable. All those in favour. Opposed. Motion carried. I will now rise to report progress to the Speaker. Oh, Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could please escort the witnesses out and I will rise to report progress to the Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Good afternoon. (interpretation ends) Report of the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Rumbolt.

Item 22: Report of the Committee of the Whole

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 59 and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be agreed to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. There is a motion on the floor. Is there a seconder?

>> *Laughter*

John Main is the seconder. The motion is in order. To the motion.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker (interpretation): All those in favour. All those opposed. The motion is carried. Thank you.

Third Reading of Bills. (interpretation ends) *Orders of the Day*. Mr. Clerk.

Item 24: Orders of the Day

Clerk (Mr. Quirke): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a reminder that the Standing Committee on Legislation meets tomorrow morning at nine o'clock in the Nanuq Boardroom.

Orders of the Day for February 24:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements

3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Replies to Budget Address
11. Petitions
12. Responses to Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motions
16. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
 - Motion 98 – 5(2)
 - Motion 99 – 5(2)
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 60
 - Bill 61
 - Bill 62
 - Bill 63
 - Bill 64
 - Bill 65
19. Second Reading of Bills

20. Consideration in Committee of
the Whole of Bills and Other
Matters

- Bill 59

21. Report of the Committee of the
Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

Thank you.

>>*Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you.
(interpretation ends) This House stands
adjourned until Wednesday, February
24, at 1:30 p.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House adjourned at 17:51*

