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Speaker: The Honourable Allan Rumbolt, MLA

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

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(Quttiktuq)

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of Human Resources*

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(Gjoa Haven)

Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole

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(Cambridge Bay)

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(Arviat North-Whale Cove)

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Table of Contents

Opening Prayer.....	8531
Ministers' Statements	8531
Members' Statements	8535
Oral Questions.....	8538
Orders of the Day	8559

A.

Daily References

Friday, September 10, 2021.....8531

B.

Ministers' Statements

671 – 5(2): Climate Change Youth Advisory Committee (Savikataaq).....8531

672 – 5(2): COVID-19 Vaccine (Kusugak)8532

673 – 5(2): Aaqqigiarvik Correctional Health Facility Opening (Hickes).....8533

674 – 5(2): QEC's 2021 Laura Ulluriaq Gautier Scholarship Recipient (Ehaloak).....8533

675 – 5(2): Homelessness Outreach Workers in Nunavut (Sheutiapik).....8534

676 – 5(2): 10-Year Driver's Licence (Akeegok)8535

C.

Members' Statements

971 – 5(2): Nursing Shortages in Nunavut Communities (Qirngnuq)8535

972 – 5(2): 2021 Whale Cove High School Graduates (Main)8536

973 – 5(2): Child Sexual Abuse (Lightstone).....8537

974 – 5(2): Chesterfield Inlet Cultural Centre (Towtongie).....8537

975 – 5(2): 2021 Arctic Bay High School Graduates (Akeegok).....8538

D.

Oral Questions

1410 – 5(2): Services for Child Sexual Abuse Victims (Lightstone).....8538

1411 – 5(2): Health Staffing Status (Main).....8540

1412 – 5(2): Community Morgues (Akoak).....8542

1413 – 5(2): Status of Park Close to Clyde River (Keyootak)8543

1414 – 5(2): Power Rates and Subsidies (Simailak)8545

1415 – 5(2): Water Infrastructure (Qamaniq).....	8546
1416 – 5(2): Resources for Mental Health (Towtongie)	8547
1417 – 5(2): Nursing Shortages in Nunavut Communities (Qirngnuq)	8549
1418 – 5(2): Southampton Caribou Population Survey (Netser).....	8551
1419 – 5(2): Country Food in Continuing Care Facilities (Kaernek)	8553
1420 – 5(2): Addressing Child Sexual Abuse across Nunavut (Lightstone).....	8554
1421 – 5(2): COVID-19 Vaccination Disinformation in Nunavut (Main).....	8556

E.

Motions

123 – 5(2): Early Adjournment (Akoak)	8559
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**Iqaluit, Nunavut
Friday, September 10, 2021**

Members Present:

Hon. David Akeeagok, Mr. Tony Akoak, Hon. Jeannie Ehloak, Hon. George Hickes, Hon. David Joanasie, Mr. Joelle Kaerner, Mr. Pauloosie Keyootak, Hon. Lorne Kusugak, Mr. Adam Lightstone, Mr. John Main, Hon. Margaret Nakashuk, Mr. Patterk Netser, Mr. David Qamaniq, Mr. Emiliano Qirngnuq, Hon. Allan Rumbolt, Hon. Joe Savikataaq, Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik, Mr. Craig Simailak, Ms. Cathy Towtongie.

>>House commenced at 9:00

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Allan Rumbolt): Good morning. I would like to ask Mr. Qirngnuq if he could lead us in prayer, please. Mr. Qirngnuq.

>>Prayer

Speaker: Good morning, members. Good morning to the people Nunavut, all those watching on TV and listening on the radio. I hope you all have a good morning.

Before we begin, I would like to remind members that the Member for Kugluktuk is expected to join us on Monday, September 13.

To the orders of the day. Ministers' Statements. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Department of Environment, Premier Savikataaq.

Item 2: Ministers' Statements

**Minister's Statement 671 – 5(2):
Climate Change Youth Advisory
Committee**

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the people of Arviat, I say "good morning" to you.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, Nunavut is at a turning point when it comes to climate change. Our youth are expressing their concerns around impacts that affect us now and will continue to worsen and affect generations of Nunavummiut to come. This is why my department has developed a youth advisory committee on climate change.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that I have appointed six youth to this new committee. These members come from the Qikiqtaaluk and Kitikmeot regions, and in the future we hope to see youth from the Kivalliq join as well.

The focus of this committee is on building knowledge, skills, and capacity for our youth to understand and respond to climate change. Engaging Nunavummiut at an early age builds resiliency and increases the ability to act on climate change, while strengthening voices at the community level.

Mr. Speaker, young people have raised their concerns about the urgency of the global climate crisis. We have seen school walkouts, protests, and demonstrations over the last few years. Those who attended and all other young Nunavummiut need to know that we hear you and we look forward to the work that will come from this committee.

The next generation are Nunavut's future leaders, and I am excited to hear what they have to say and how they hope to create a better Nunavut for us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Ministers' Statements. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Department of Health, Minister Kusugak.

**Minister's Statement 672 – 5(2):
COVID-19 Vaccine**

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Good morning, Nunavummiut. Mr. Speaker, as we head into fall and days grow colder and shorter, we will spend more time indoors, in classrooms and offices. This increases the risk of respiratory infections like COVID-19. For this reason, it is important to ensure we are all protected by getting vaccinated.

Mr. Speaker, as of August 31, 2021, 81 percent of Nunavummiut over the age of 12 have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 72 percent are fully vaccinated. This is a good start, but we can do better, and it is important that more people get this life-saving vaccine. Currently children under the age of 12, who make up approximately 25 percent of our population, are not eligible for this protection. The more people over the age of 12 who get the vaccine, the more protected our communities will be and the better we protect those around us.

Mr. Speaker, with the start of the school year, the Department of Health is working with the Department of

Education to improve vaccine uptake in school-aged children. Clinics have started in schools, which is an opportunity for all communities to improve their vaccine uptake numbers.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to remember that the more people who are vaccinated in our communities, the fewer public health restrictions we will need to keep COVID-19 under control. More infectious variants circulating in Canada that spread much faster make getting both doses of the vaccine even more important in order to prevent infection or severe disease.

Mr. Speaker, Nunavummiut have shown resilience and patience during this pandemic. Everyone has had to make sacrifices and getting 85 percent of our eligible population vaccinated will reduce the risk of ending the public health emergency. The vaccine is safe, it's effective, and it does save lives.

Mr. Speaker, vaccine continues to be available at all health centres and through Iqaluit Public Health. Mr. Speaker, I encourage anyone who has not received their vaccines to contact their local health care providers and arrange to have it done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Ministers' Statements. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, Minister Hickes.

**Minister's Statement 673 – 5(2):
Aaqqigiarvik Correctional Health
Facility Opening**

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand today to announce that Phase 1 of the Aaqqigiarvik Correctional Healing Facility has been completed.

With the opening of Aaqqigiarvik, we now have appropriate infrastructure to house maximum-security inmates for the first time and we can create a rehabilitative environment where Nunavummiut in conflict with the law can find help to address the root causes of their actions without the infrastructure itself impeding their progress.

Mr. Speaker and members, throughout the planning of the facility, the Department of Justice consulted with an elder advisory committee to ensure the facility was culturally appropriate for Inuit clients and that the design incorporated IQ. For example, at their recommendation, Aaqqigiarvik now includes a dedicated elders' space to allow elders to meet with clients on a regular basis in an inclusive, safe and respectful environment.

Mr. Speaker, we used lessons from the Rankin Inlet Healing Facility to create a centre where the priority is healing and rehabilitation rather than security and confinement of individuals in conflict with the law. With appropriate physical safeguards in place, facility staff will be able to take a caseworker approach to managing client populations.

Aaqqigiarvik can hold up to 112 clients; nearly double that of the old Baffin Correctional Centre. With this increased

capacity, the Department of Justice will no longer have to rely on southern jurisdictions to house clients.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Hon. George Hickes: This larger facility was designed with the future in mind, meeting our needs for years to come.

Mr. Speaker and members, I look forward to seeing the completion of phase 2 of this project and all of the new programs and services for incarcerated Nunavummiut made possible with the completion of this important building. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Ministers' Statements. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Minister Ehaloak.

**Minister's Statement 674 – 5(2):
QEC's 2021 Laura Ulluriaq
Gautier Scholarship Recipient**

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak: Good morning to my colleagues and to all Nunavummiut.

Uqaqtii, every fall sitting, I have the honour of announcing the Qulliq Energy Corporation's annual Laura Ulluriaq Gauthier scholarship recipient, and this year is no different. I am pleased to inform the House that the Qulliq Energy Corporation has awarded Ms. Zan Tao of Iqaluit with this year's \$5,000 scholarship. Ms. Tao has just begun her first semester at the University of Waterloo's Bachelor of Science in Health Studies program.

For two years, Ms. Tao worked with the Government of Nunavut's Department of Health and most recently with the territorial COVID-19 response team as a chief public health officer's service coordinator. Considering the global pandemic, Ms. Tao has courageously chosen a challenging and important career path. After her studies, she plans to return to Nunavut and apply her knowledge and passion of health strategies to benefit the long-term wellness of Nunavummiut.

Along with progressing in her career aspirations, Ms. Tao also commits her time to bettering her community and advancing her academic performance. Through her extracurricular activities, she continues to build her leadership capacities in music, sport, health, and education. Most notably, Ms. Tao has already begun advocating for Nunavummiut early in her career. Last spring she interviewed students and teachers at the local high school to support a made-in-Nunavut curriculum. She understands the importance of culturally relevant subjects in the classroom for future generations.

I am proud to award the scholarship to a deserving candidate who continues to strive to help Nunavummiut during unprecedented times. I wish her well as she begins this new chapter on her journey to contributing to the health and wellness of the territory. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Ministers' Statements. The Hon. Minister responsible for Family Services, Minister Sheutiapik.

Minister's Statement 675 – 5(2): Homelessness Outreach Workers in Nunavut

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik

(interpretation): Thank you. Good morning. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, there are great needs across the territory for support to those experiencing homelessness or at risk. There are many communities where there are no shelters available for people to find refuge.

I am pleased to announce that this summer we have fully staffed three new positions in the department to assist with community support in relation to homelessness. These positions are called homelessness outreach workers and are based in Cambridge Bay, Rankin Inlet, and Pond Inlet, covering the three regions in which they are based.

Mr. Speaker, homelessness outreach workers will work closely with existing programs and community social service workers in assisting individuals experiencing homelessness. They are also committed to working with communities in developing any initiatives or programs related to homelessness, such as assisting communities in developing proposals to start a shelter.

Mr. Speaker, let me repeat that our department will assist any community that wishes to start a homelessness shelter in providing help to prepare a proposal for funding to the department and, if successful, in providing financial assistance.

Mr. Speaker, it is our hope that these homelessness outreach workers will be

able to provide more assistance to those experiencing homelessness in Nunavut, and to support communities in developing the services and programs to meet the needs of their residents. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Ministers' Statements. The Hon. Minister responsible for Economic Development and Transportation, Minister Akeegok.

Minister's Statement 676 – 5(2): 10-Year Driver's Licence

Hon. David Akeegok (interpretation): Good morning. I say "good morning" to the people of Quttiktuq.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to update the Members of this House on some changes we have made to the *Driver's Licence Regulations*.

For many Nunavummiut, the driver's licence is their only form of photo identification. Over the years there have been many instances where the department has had to issue temporary documents on short notice to people whose licences had expired. Sometimes these were for travellers stranded with expired licences or sometimes for people starting new jobs. Whatever the reason, it was usually a stressful process.

For several years now, adult Canadians have been able to get a 10-year passport. It only made sense that a driver's licence, which most people use a lot more than their passport, would also be available for a 10-year period.

Mr. Speaker, we have revised the regulations, and adults will soon be given the choice between the current five-year renewal period and a ten-year renewal for their driver's licences and general identification cards.

The modifications to the motor vehicles system are underway now, and the option of a 10-year driver's licence will be available to Nunavummiut in November 2021. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Ministers' Statements. Item 3. Members' Statements. Hon. Member for Netsilik, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Item 3: Members' Statements

Member's Statement 971 – 5(2): Nursing Shortages in Nunavut Communities

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say "good morning" to my fellow residents of Netsilik and my colleagues.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the shortage of nurses in our community health centres.

Mr. Speaker, I do recognize that there are huge pressures on the nursing profession across Canada, and I do understand that the Government of Nunavut has struggled for several years to fill nursing positions across our territory. However, it seems that the situation is getting worse.

A number of my colleagues have raised concerns regarding community health centres being closed due to a lack of staff. Those staff who are working, often late hours and double shifts, are easily overworked and burned out. This issue was also addressed during our spring sitting.

On July 16 the Minister of Health issued a news release announcing closures of seven community health centres over the summer. This is very concerning. Residents in our communities need to be reassured that if they have health care needs, they will be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite certain that recruiting more nurses to work in Nunavut is one of the top priorities of the Minister of Health. It should also be a priority to our Minister of Education and Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College. One clear solution to Nunavut's need for health care professionals is for more Nunavummiut to get the education and training they need to be able to fill these positions.

At the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions on this issue. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Members' Statements. The Hon. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

**Member's Statement 972 – 5(2): 2021
Whale Cove High School
Graduates**

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my constituents in Arviat and Whale Cove.

Mr. Speaker, last month during August, having been invited and just before the local graduation ceremonies, I travelled to Whale Cove. They had five graduates at the ceremony where it was great to be invited. The graduates were:

- Caroline Qitiqliq
- Mary Angoo
- Donna Okalik
- Mark Angoo
- Shaelyn Kuksuk

I am very proud of these graduates and I encourage them to pursue further education. They are now free to pursue further education wherever they want. Graduating from grade 12 should not be the end of their education process. There is a lot more out there after completing grade 12.

I would also like to recognize local leaders, including the principal, Eva Angoo, thank you very much, along with the mayor, Percy Kabloona.

I would also like to thank the RCMP in Whale Cove. They took part in the graduation parade which included allowing the students to ride in the police vehicles. It was very nice to see and we were very proud to witness it that way, so I thank the RCMP.

Lastly, I would also like to thank the Issatik Co-op Hotel for holding a feast.

Since having been elected to represent Whale Cove, the residents have always been very welcoming and I thank them for their continuing hospitality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Members' Statements. The Hon. Minister for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Member's Statement 973 – 5(2): Child Sexual Abuse

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In June our Assembly held a televised hearing to review the annual report of the Representative for Children and Youth. Throughout the hearings, we discussed many different issues that are faced by children and youth in Nunavut, as well as the many challenges and barriers that the Government of Nunavut must overcome to provide adequate services and protection to our children.

Much of the discussion over the two-day hearing surrounded the issue of child sexual abuse. I would like to note that in Nunavut, children and youth suffer abuse at a rate that is ten times the national average. Nunavut also has the highest rates of child sexual abuse in Canada. I believe that the Government of Nunavut must do more to fulfill its obligation to ensure the safety of all children to increase prevention, intervention, and postvention, which includes long-term counselling services for victims.

Child sexual abuse is an issue that I have been raising repeatedly over the years. In 2019 I asked the Premier if the rate of child sexual abuse in Nunavut should be considered a crisis, and also called on our government to formulate a collaborative approach to protect vulnerable children. I did not receive a clear response then and there has been no declaration or announcement of significant efforts since. At our televised hearing in June, I asked the

Representative for Children and Youth the same question: "Are the prevalent rates of child sexual abuse a crisis?" and I received a clear response, "yes."

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be asking questions on this specific matter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone, and I apologize for referring to you as a minister. Members' Statements. The Hon. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towtongie.

Member's Statement 974 – 5(2): Chesterfield Inlet Cultural Centre

Ms. Towtongie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer we went to Chesterfield Inlet to open the Piqusilirivvik Cultural Centre.

(interpretation) We opened the cultural centre in Chesterfield Inlet for use by community members. I would like to thank our Minister of Culture and Heritage, Margaret Nakashuk, for being in attendance, along with the President of KIA, Kono Tattuinee, the President of NTI, Aluki Kotierk, as well as the Vice-President of KIA, David Kuksuk. Many leaders were able to attend and I thank the people from the community of Chesterfield Inlet for their warm hospitality.

The cultural centre is a very nice building. When you first walk in, there is a little shop on the right-hand side where you can buy locally sewn and crafted items. There is also a sewing room, and I saw many potential projects that can be worked on. There are sewing machines

that are available for use. There is also a work area for the men or whoever wants to make harpoons or *qamutiit*. We expect that it will also be used by other people in the Kivalliq region.

It was named the Leonard Putulik Cultural Centre and that was gratifying to witness as many residents of Chesterfield Inlet celebrated the opening of the facility, which was quite enjoyable. I ask my colleagues for their applause as this is the first large infrastructure project in Chesterfield Inlet in many years. Thank you.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Members' Statements. The Hon. Member for Quttiktuq, Minister Akeegok.

Member's Statement 975 – 5(2): 2021 Arctic Bay High School Graduates

Hon. David Akeegok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On August 27 I accompanied our Commissioner, Eva Aariak, Minister Joanasie, and Minister Sheutiapik to Arctic Bay to commemorate their local graduating class of eight students. We accompanied them and their families at the local feast and ceremony, which was quite enjoyable.

Further, the following day, Commissioner Eva Aariak represented Governor General Mary Simon to recognize a local elder, Qaapik Attagutsiak, and she was presented with the highest recognition. Everyone was extremely proud of her as did we, the visiting dignitaries.

I also wish to thank my colleagues and other officials who were able to travel to the community, and I encourage the recent graduates to pursue their educational dreams. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Members' Statements. I have no more names on my list. We will move on with the orders of the day. Item 4. Returns to Oral Questions. Item 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. There being none, Item 6. Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Item 6: Oral Questions

Question 1410 – 5(2): Services for Child Sexual Abuse Victims

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, the opening message of Nunavut's Representative for Children and Youth in the 2019-2020 annual report notes her shock at the frequency and extent of violence and physical and sexual abuse faced by Nunavut youth.

Information provided by the Department of Family Services on critical injuries and deaths of young people in Nunavut confirms the situation. Health care workers across the territory will have been involved in many of these cases. Although it is not clear how these cases are reported on, I am confident that the minister must be aware of the situation.

I would like to ask: would the minister agree with me and the Representative for Children and Youth that the high rate of violence, physical and sexual abuse against children in Nunavut is at a crisis level? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Department of Health, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with that statement in that for me, I think any abuse of any children is at a crisis level, Mr. Speaker. It should not be accepted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for that response. I also agree that any level of sexual abuse should be considered a crisis.

Mr. Speaker, during our recent televised hearing in June, at first we heard that there were zero mental health workers in Nunavut who specialize in providing counselling services to youth aged 15 to 17. We then heard that there was one pediatrician who provides mental support in collaboration with the Umingmak facility.

Given the high prevalence of child sexual abuse, I fear that the current level of support to children victims may be inadequate. The horrific traumatic experience that they have suffered, I'm sure, leaves them scarred for life. There is a little known fact that many of the perpetrators themselves were once victims. I believe that it is necessary to

ensure that these children are receiving adequate support they need to heal and get over this if we really wish to end the cycle.

I would like to ask for my next question: how many victimized children are currently receiving mental health support by the Department of Health? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not have the level of information my colleague is asking for. I do not have the detail in terms of how many children and youth are receiving mental health or other support at this time. I just do not have that figure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize that this is a very difficult topic and I would like to apologize to the Assembly for starting off our Friday on a heavy note.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to note that our government and the Department of Health have made a significant investment in increasing the number of mental health workers across the territory, but it's not clear how many of those workers have received specialized training to work with youth who have experienced sexual assault and trauma.

I would like to ask the minister to provide an update on what the Department of Health is doing to ensure that mental health workers will receive

appropriate specialized training in this area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the line of questioning I am getting on this matter. It is something that needs to be discussed and it needs to be discussed, whether it's a Friday morning or a Monday afternoon, and I appreciate that. It is very serious.

Mr. Speaker, our department has been working hard to try to get mental health workers into Nunavut and it's one of the many struggles we have within our department is recruiting professionals in health and mental health care in Nunavut. In saying that, when we do get the mental health workers, we are doing our best because we know the numbers or the numbers are there for supporting our children and youth who need mental health support that the mental health workers we do have, have some experience and expertise in youth mental health work and for those that do not, we will work with them to see if and how we can improve that sector of that mental health program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Question 1411 – 5(2): Health Staffing Status

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) My questions this morning are for the Minister of Human Resources, and they concern staff housing and wages and

compensation for health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, I asked a written question to the Minister of Health in the spring sitting and I thank the Department of Health for their response. My written question was concerning health staffing status in Arviat and Whale Cove. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the numbers contained in the response to written question are not too great from where I sit. Fourteen of 37 positions in Arviat are vacant, this was as of June 1, 2021, and 8 out of 16 positions in Whale Cove are vacant.

In the Department of Health's response to me, they cited a number of factors that impact their staffing within the health department, including staff housing. This is a topic I have questioned the minister on before. My first question for the minister is: what is the shortage? How many units is the Department of Human Resources short when it comes to staffing health professionals or health workers within Nunavut's communities? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Minister responsible for Human Resources, Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have definitive numbers for each community, but the staff housing overall is we have very limited staff housing and with the current situation we're in and the amount of staff housing, there are a lot of positions that are vacant and/or are being posted without staff housing on the list. We don't necessarily break it [down] by the health or by departments, but for each community, we ask that the departments

prioritize their advertisements and if they ask for staff housing, we notify them of the amount of staff housing that is available and it is very limited right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) It's my understanding that there is a prioritization schedule in which health professionals are supposed to be at the very top. These are among the most important positions in our communities, Mr. Speaker. These are people who we rely on to save lives in some cases. To hear that there is no staff housing available for somebody who could be a lifesaver makes the difference in terms of one of our constituents, one of our Nunavut residents, it's very troubling to hear that our government is struggling to provide these very important professionals with staff housing.

My next question for the minister is: is this a new problem or is this a problem that has been constant over the years of the term of this government or is this a problem that is getting worse, or are there signs that things are improving in terms of providing staff housing for health care professionals in Nunavut? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there is a prioritized priority setting and health care is on the top of the list, and typically if there are any houses there, it tends to go to those that are saving lives. There is a priority

setting in terms of which staff would receive staff housing, but for the lack of staff housing, this has been, as our public service grows and the demand for more housing comes, it's for this year, it has reached a critical mass where there are way more positions that want to be advertised with staff housing and the amount of staff housing that's available to us.

It's no different from public housing and it's the amount of stock that we have in terms of the number of staff housing. The housing corporation has a tender that has been on for any community to see if there are any leases that we can have and there are not enough houses in our communities to get that uptake. With a lot of combination of this, it's just we don't have the stock. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) When it comes to wages and compensation that are paid to government employees, I believe that the human resources department is the experts within the government.

When we look particularly at health care professionals, the Minister of Health has mentioned that there is a national health workforce shortage and this, I believe, has led other jurisdictions within Canada to do things such as add hiring bonuses or maybe up their compensation and benefits to professionals working in other jurisdictions.

My last question for the minister is: working with the Department of Health,

can the minister commit to making sure that Nunavut's wages and compensation paid to health care professionals are competitive and are attractive to help bring in these important workers into our communities? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're working very closely with the Department of Health, especially on the nurses. There is a crisis across Canada and our wages need to be at par or better in order to attract our nurses. That work is underway. When they are specified and if there is a shortage throughout the country, there are ways of looking at their occupation to see how we can get our wages up.

Also, we are in the middle of our collective agreement negotiations with the NEU, which our nurses fall under, and that collective agreement needs to get done in order for us to start moving forward because that collective agreement has expired. Once we get that, we should be able to have more certainty for the members, especially for our nurses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Gjoa Haven, Mr. Akoak.

Question 1412 – 5(2): Community Morgues

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues and community of Gjoa Haven. I have been asked to bring this topic up again in regard to community morgues.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Community and Government Services, and they again concern the issue of community morgues.

Mr. Speaker, this is the sixth time that I have formally raised this issue in the Legislative Assembly and I am hopeful that this will be the final time that I need to raise it before the end of our current term.

Mr. Speaker, all Nunavut communities need adequate morgue facilities. Mr. Speaker, when I last raised this issue during our recent spring sitting, I was pleased to hear that the minister's department had sent correspondence to the Municipality of Gjoa Haven on the issue of helping the community to acquire a proper morgue.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm the status of Gjoa Haven's application for funding under the department's Small Capital Fund? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Minister responsible for Community and Government Services, Minister Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for his question. I know that this has been a passion for Mr. Akoak for quite some time and I understand the compassion that he feels.

Community and Government Services has been working diligently with the Hamlet of Gjoa Haven on assisting them for their community morgue. Under the Small Capital Fund, the Municipality of Gjoa Haven had submitted their

application late and because they applied so late, the Small Community Fund had already been allocated to other communities and had reached the maximum of its funding allocation. With the assistance of our department, in working with the Hamlet of Gjoa Haven, we advised them that they should apply for the funding after April 1. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry to hear that they did apply late and they didn't come through, but since I have been MLA since 2013, our graveyard was very small, but as of today, it grew. There are a lot of people who have passed on since, so it is important to the community.

As the minister is aware, her predecessor indicated to me that the department is "committed to assisting municipalities with the cost of converting a surplus building into a morgue and visitation area for the deceased through its Small Capital Fund, with funding packages of up to \$250,000." Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm which Nunavut communities have received funding to date for this purpose? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak: Thank you, *Uqaqtii*. I appreciate the member's questions. At this time I don't have the breakdown, but I can get the breakdown for the member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister clarify what learning modules and other resources are offered by the Municipal Training Organization to assist hamlet employees in respect to the maintenance of new morgue facilities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Again I thank the member for his question. Our Municipal Training Organization within the government works in collaboration with all municipalities on training. Unfortunately I don't have the breakdown for that specific type of training, but I can get the information for the member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Uqqummiut, Mr. Keyootak.

Question 1413 – 5(2): Status of Park Close to Clyde River

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say "good morning" to those who are following the proceedings in Qikiqtarjuaq and Clyde River, as well as my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my questions to the Minister of Environment.

Mr. Speaker, we represent communities that are constantly searching for permanent jobs for their residents as it's

very hard for people who want to work because there are no jobs available.

Mr. Speaker, a park was going to be created near Clyde River along with several jobs, obviously. Can the Minister of Environment tell us the status of the park that is planned for near Clyde River that they were going to open? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Department of Environment, Premier Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for your question on the status of the Agguttinni Park, which I believe you're asking about. We're still in the process of working on the details and in the year 2021-22, \$875,000 will be spent for capital and buildings. The funding that is slated for that is set for 10 years and within the 10 years, if I recall correctly, we will be spending \$7.5 million for the Agguttinni Park. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Keyootak.

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for that clarification. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Environment repeat those details? As I prefaced earlier, jobs are very hard to get, even though you want to create them. I know that it's still in the process, as the minister stated. Approximately how many jobs would be created for the Agguttinni Park? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Premier Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the work at the beginning still involving some work, however, due to the incomplete status, we cannot estimate the number of jobs the park may create as the final numbers are not complete, but it is obvious that once it is operational, the park will have employees. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Keyootak.

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As development continues, it is good to see the opportunities for employment it may conceivably create. During the preparatory plans, is there any discussion or design for an office building in Clyde River once they start working and the park is open? Will there be an office once the park is opened? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Premier Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, an office building will be constructed in the community, and further, within the park area, there will be a shelter built, but the large building would be built in the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Baker Lake, Mr. Simailak.

Question 1414 – 5(2): Power Rates and Subsidies

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues and constituents of Baker Lake.

Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation.

As the minister will recall, she made a statement in the Legislative Assembly at its sitting of June 1, 2018 concerning the Qulliq Energy Corporation's General Rate Application.

At that time she stated that "In light of the decision to keep the current rate structure where electricity rates vary from community to community, cabinet came to a consensus that an assessment of the existing Nunavut Electricity Subsidy Program through the Department of Finance is required. Once the assessment is completed, the Government of Nunavut will update members on the findings. (...) I...have directed the QEC to work closely with the Government of Nunavut in initiating this important next step."

Mr. Speaker, it is now September 2021. Can the minister update the House on the findings of this review? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Minister Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for his question. The Qulliq Energy Corporation adjusts through electricity rates that are

carried out, yes, through the general rate application and yes, in June the Qulliq Energy Corporation did decide to go with a territorial rate application. Through the hiring of the company which is the InterGroup Consultants group, they have made recommendations to support the development and regulatory reviews of the Qulliq Energy Corporation's 2022-23 Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the general rate application, and their recommendation is to move to a territorial rate for all communities in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for her response. As the minister is aware, the Qulliq Energy Corporation's current business plan indicates that one of its priorities for the 2021-22 fiscal year is to "Develop mechanisms that support the preparation and filing of the next General Rate Application." Can the minister confirm when the Qulliq Energy Corporation will be submitting its next general rate application? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) The Qulliq Energy Corporation has made the decision that due to external circumstances regarding this territorial election coming in the fall, the Qulliq Energy Corporation is recommending that the general rate application submission process take place in 2022. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions.

The Hon. Member for Tununiq, Mr. Qamaniq.

Question 1415 – 5(2): Water Infrastructure

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say “good morning” to my fellow residents of Tununiq, my colleagues, and Nunavummiut.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Community and Government Services, and they concern the important issue of water infrastructure.

As the minister will recall, one of the supplementary appropriation bills that the Legislative Assembly approved during our recent spring sitting included capital carryover funding for the Pond Inlet water intake repair project.

In August of this year the Department of Community and Government Services awarded a contract valued at \$585,600 to Pilitak Enterprises for this work. Can the minister confirm that this work is on schedule? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Minister responsible for Community and Government Services, Minister Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Regarding the Pond Inlet planned water intake system, the system failed in November 2019, as my member is aware. Since that time, Community and Government Services has provided support in engineering and expertise to resolve the issues, and a temporary ice-floating water system was completed in September 2020. Community and

Government Services intends to extend the lifespan of this intake through construction of redundant intake and backup submersible pumps prior to the winter of 2021-22. Community and Government Services intends to complete the planning stage for the construction of the permanent water treatment prior to the end of this fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for her response. Mr. Speaker, in August of this year the federal government announced [\$1.8] million in planning funding for new water treatment plants in a number of Nunavut communities, including Pond Inlet. The Government of Nunavut subsequently awarded a contract to EXP Services for the development of a business case for new water treatment facilities and infrastructure in Pond Inlet. Can the minister confirm that the final report from the project will be provided to the Municipality of Pond Inlet and the community’s Member of the Legislative Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I thank the member again for his question. Community and Government Services assures Pond Inlet residents that their drinking water meets the Nunavut drinking water regulations. Community and Government Services has started a planning phase through developing the business case which is anticipated to be completed by March 2022. Community and Government Services is in the early

stages of the business case development for the proposed water treatment plant in Pond Inlet. Community and Government Services will ensure that the Municipality of Pond Inlet is informed of the process and the stages through the replacement of their plant. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for her response. Mr. Speaker, when I last raised the issue of water infrastructure in the Legislative Assembly, I asked if the Department of Community and Government Services was working with the Nunavut Association of Municipalities to develop a comprehensive inventory and set of condition rates for water trucks in the territory. In June of this year the minister indicated that she would be willing to provide this information to me. Can the minister update the House today on the status of this work? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I can provide the information to the member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towtongie.

Question 1416 – 5(2): Resources for Mental Health

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say “good morning”

to the people of Rankin Inlet and Chesterfield Inlet.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I made a statement about a young woman who had mental health issues. I would like to ask the Minister of Health about this subject.

This young woman with mental health issues was not receiving the support she needed. We all know of individuals in our communities with severe mental health issues who are just walking around in the communities and are not getting the support they need. There are even some orphans who have mental health issues.

Can the minister provide an update on what steps his department is taking to ensure that Nunavut residents who are suffering from severe mental illnesses or disorders are getting the help they need? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Department of Health, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Should there be anybody who needs those services, I would first encourage them to approach the local health centre and indicate to them that they need help and support. Once this has occurred, the health professionals in the health centre can then start the process of accessing and providing the services that the individual requires. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This young woman that I am referring to has approached the local health centre on many occasions, but she has not been provided any help. She has nowhere to go, she doesn't want to go back to her house, and she is suffering greatly with her mental illness. This is concerning. We all know that she is not the only one with that problem.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, in the spring, this Assembly passed Nunavut's new *Mental Health Act*, which provides for an extensive mental health resource and support system. When we were reviewing the proposed legislation, when it was a bill, it was clear that the Department of Health had a lot of work to do with respect to hiring and training a full complement of mental health workers to provide services across Nunavut's 25 communities.

Can the minister tell us today how far his department has progressed to date in recruiting, hiring, and training mental health workers for Nunavut's communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague indicated that this individual went to the local health centre on several occasions and did not receive help. It makes me unhappy to hear of these instances. Nonetheless, what I would ask is if the member can relay that information to me, not right now at this House but outside of the session. She can pass along that information about the individual as this would be beneficial.

We all know that disconcerted people or those who are mentally stressed out really need assistance and I want to start off with that response. Our officials can investigate that matter and what assistance has been provided, if any, to this person who requested support services.

In the other aspect related to your question about the legislation, we started working on the new *Mental Health Act* sections this spring and this was debated, and the draft bill was introduced in this House. During our review of the legislation, we spent the entire winter being focused on that, at least in our estimation, to resolve all concerns. The new bill will require further implementation and most of the subject issues that were raised in the query are included in this legislation and we are trying to resolve them, related to getting mental health support workers, as well as psychiatrists and other professionals for older people, along with workers to assist our youth and children. This is extremely difficult to change on a whim.

Throughout Canada and globally, these challenges are systemic in terms of the lack of qualified counsellors for people who may be physically challenged. They are facing shortages at this time, but we continue to try to fill these positions by using the new legislation that outlines the workers required to adhere to this bill. We are still working out plans on how we can implement this without any unnecessary processes as we need to fill them and complete this new legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your second and final supplementary, Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for his proper response. However, we are not only talking about one individual; it is the whole system that has to be improved. We have to make sure that we resolve this issue for that individual and that includes a discussion I had with the head nurse.

(interpretation ends) My comments were related to the mental health system and the support system, and I appreciate the minister on his work, but what we do need... Mr. Speaker, although Nunavut's new *Mental Health Act* was passed in the spring, it is not yet in force. Can the minister describe what needs to be done before bringing the new *Mental Health Act* into force and when does he anticipate in doing so? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I misheard the situation and that this person had yet to receive assistance, so I am glad they received the support they required.

Mr. Speaker, we debated the contents of the *Mental Health Act* this winter as the new legislation specific to mental health includes many details and services that require more discussions and to bring out more issues that require implementation. It also needs more clarification to make the subjects understandable.

We will follow the implementation plan during this winter, Mr. Speaker. It is hard to finalize a date when this will be fully implemented and I cannot provide

a definitive timeline, but we will follow the implementation plan to deal with issues that arise from the action items listed in the legislation for mental health we worked on this spring. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Netsilik, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Question 1417 – 5(2): Nursing Shortages in Nunavut Communities

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say “good day” to my fellow Nunavummiut.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question today to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, we have known since the spring sitting that Nunavut would experience a shortage of health care providers such as nurses that required some health centres to be closed for periods of time. In July this came to pass when the minister announced the closure of seven community health centres, one of them closing for over a month.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister describe how the Department of Health managed these health centre closures over the summer months, including any specific or unexpected challenges that may have arisen? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Department of Health, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the spring closures that my colleague has

referenced, we envisioned that six community health centres that were facing closure. However, I am happy to report that as of August 16, there have been no permanent closures of health centres.

We have been able to staff the health centres, perhaps not with nurses, but with emergency responders called paramedics who are the professionals that provide medical care in ambulances. We have provided paramedics in these communities, so there were no complete closures in any of the community health centres. I'm glad that the health centres were fully staffed.

With the fall coming, the nurses that were on summer break are now starting to return to the communities and with the shortage of nurses becoming less of an issue, I can say that we haven't experienced any undue health risks thanks to the good work done by the Department of Health and the nurses in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for his detailed response. There are some communities that provide those services in more than one community.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, the minister's July 16 news release indicates that the Department of Health would use a combination of virtual health, fly-in clinics, and paramedic services to support clients while community health centres were closed.

Can the minister provide a brief update on how each of these measures was successful or not successful in meeting the needs for health care in those communities where health centres were closed for periods of time?
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Mr. Speaker, the nurses who went to help the communities... It sounds like an air force plane; perhaps they are carrying nurses.

Mr. Speaker, we thank the paramedics that we needed to bring in and we brought in. They really helped the communities. I can't hear myself anymore.

>> *Laughter*

My apologies; there is something flying overhead. It sounds like an air force plane. They are having an exercise in Iqaluit right now and are circling overhead.

Mr. Speaker, let me restart. The frontline workers such as paramedics and emergency nurses are people whom we thank graciously as they are extremely important especially when communities experience an emergency. They lessen the impacts that could have spiralled out of control and for their efforts to provide these services.

Mr. Speaker, this was a big boon for our government, as we have never experienced an emergency in this context of an entire territorial challenge with a shortage of medical care professionals and health care workers in

our health care centres. This was an unprecedented situation, but when they needed to communicate with outside workers, they were able to conduct these communication needs. This applied to regular phone calls, telehealth meetings or video calls, and this provided much-needed assistance and it proceeded smoothly here in Nunavut, Mr. Speaker.

The patients requiring appointments were all accommodated and when residents required health care assistance, and if services were available, the help was sent to that community. I am also happy to announce that medevacs and other emergency flights were continued for people who required emergency health services, and this too was continued, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for letting me respond.

Speaker: Thank you. Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, with respect to what the minister spoke to this spring when we first started hearing about this matter, many health centres were going to be closed for the summer months and it was almost unbearable thinking of the consequences, but we have passed that situation and overcame that emergency.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, the minister's July 16 news release also indicates that the Department of Health has a new contract with the Bayshore Healthcare Agency to provide nurse and midwifery services to Nunavut. Can the minister provide additional information on how many nurses and midwives from the Bayshore Healthcare Agency came to work in Nunavut this summer?

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This program is ongoing and we are continuing to bring in nurses. We are still working with recruiters at Bayshore and it is quite a dynamic situation. Once things stop changing so much, I will then be able to provide you with statistics. We continue to actively bring in nurses through Bayshore. Once that slows down and once we have all the numbers, we will present them to the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Aivilik, Mr. Netser.

Question 1418 – 5(2): Southampton Caribou Population Survey

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say “good morning” to my fellow community members and the people of Naujaat.

Today I would like to direct my question to the Minister of the Environment.

Now that fall is upon us, people are starting to go caribou hunting around Southampton Island. We hear that caribou are fewer in numbers and some communities are saying that they are lucky that they even still have caribou.

It has been a while since the caribou population was surveyed on Southampton Island. Has his department made any plans to do a caribou population survey around Southampton Island? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Minister responsible for the Department of Environment, the Hon. Premier Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2019 the Southampton caribou were surveyed and the numbers did not change very much since the survey in 2017, although there was a slight decrease. We don't have a plan to do a population survey in the near future. We would like them to be surveyed annually, but we're lacking in biologists right now. To use the Qamanirjuaq herd as an example, the Beverly herd or the Baffin herd, whenever we can, we survey them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I understand what the minister is saying. However, we need to have an answer to the people who ask us questions. The department doesn't seem to have any plans to do a survey or count the caribou on Southampton Island in the near future. People are very concerned. Some people are not so concerned, but other people are very concerned. We need to have a clear understanding of the situation of caribou.

The indication in 2017 was there were fewer caribou and then after 2019, there were reports that there were fewer caribou now, and we're in the year 2021 now and there doesn't seem to be any plans to count them again. When can the people of Coral Harbour expect their caribou to be counted again?

Other communities really look at our caribou herd because they are nice and fat and people like to buy them. They're very important to us and we don't want them to diminish in number. Well, none of us want them to diminish in number and we don't want to run out of caribou.

When can the department count the caribou? Would it be after they deal with the Bluenose and Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Premier Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We still don't know when the Southampton caribou will be getting counted. However, I can say that there were approximately 1,600 caribou in 2017 and there were approximately 1,000 caribou in 2019. There are still around 1,000 caribou up to today, so the numbers haven't really changed. I can tell the member that we don't know when the caribou will be counted again. To use this example, if the numbers of caribou go down substantially, we will count them, but right now they seem to be at around the same level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister. What can our hunters do? We are very concerned about our caribou and we have to know how many there are and if they are diminishing in number. If the hunters demand that they want to know, will the department act? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Premier Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we would look into the matter if the people of Coral Harbour become very concerned about their caribou. If they say that they seem to be diminishing in number substantially, then we would definitely look at that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Amittuq, Mr. Kaernerck.

Question 1419 – 5(2): Country Food in Continuing Care Facilities

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my fellow residents of Amittuq.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to direct my question to the Minister of Health this morning.

Mr. Speaker, the reasoning for my question is that a concern exists in Igloolik that was recently brought up. There is a facility looking after those with physical mobility issues, or a (interpretation ends) continuing care centre, (interpretation) in the community.

This might not make sense, but there is a patient housed there from Nunavut whose sons visit and often they bring traditional country food for their father. However, when one of the sons got to the centre, they were told by staff that the food they brought would have to be sequestered in the freezer for two weeks. They stated that this requirement of setting it aside prior to consumption was

due to COVID-19. That is simply administrative overkill, with no logic. These are people from within Nunavut and they are bringing traditional Inuit food to an elder who is hungering for their food. That is painful to even hear about.

I wonder if the minister can explain to us if there is a policy that involves a two-week isolation period for frozen food followed by staff at that facility, where they have to be kept in the freezer for two weeks. Is there such a policy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Department of Health, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank my colleague for writing about that matter. We received a letter from the member, so our department is looking into the matter to see if it is true and to see what the actual policies are.

The only thing I know about this is the fact that the food needs to be inspected before it is eaten, like walrus meat, for example, to ensure that it doesn't have trichinosis present. That is the only food that I have heard of that needs to be tested before it is eaten. I don't know about policies for other foods. I have never heard of any other policies.

However, I can tell my colleague that because you wrote about this matter, we are looking into it to see if it actually happened and why it happened like that. We are working to respond to your letter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Kaernerk.

Mr. Kaernerk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for committing to investigating the matter further. The facts that I have presented to the minister are truthful. We are knowledgeable about our traditional food and that is a fact. These are our elders that I am referring to because I have been putting in an effort to properly represent the elders here. That person who wrote that letter was telling the truth and he is quite concerned.

A question now comes to mind, Mr. Speaker. The officials who work in these places, such as (interpretation ends) managers and directors (interpretation) or those who work in a leadership capacity, should be told that our culture is unique here in Canada, which is true. How can this practice be improved with respect to our traditional food? (interpretation ends) Let me put it this way, Mr. Speaker, for those elders that are receiving country food, I'm sure if you're looking at the policy, there is no policy when it comes to quarantining country food. It doesn't make sense to me.

Can these management staff be [given orientation] once they are put into a facility to take care of elders, for example, in the continuing care centres, on our tradition, our culture, that we live in Nunavut? Can the minister clarify to me if they can be [given] cultural orientation? Can that happen? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, this is currently being looked into and whether these details are accurate or not. If it did in fact occur, then actions will be taken, Mr. Speaker.

The people who work there or anywhere in Nunavut should be given cultural orientation on *Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit*. This would be arranged and would be made available. We also have Inuit on staff at the continuing care centre and they can be worked with.

Again, I don't want to speculate at this moment about if what the member is saying is true or not because it is necessary that we first get the facts of the matter and then move forward from there.

With respect to our elders who need to eat their traditional foods, we understand that very well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Question 1420 – 5(2): Addressing Child Sexual Abuse across Nunavut

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next set of questions is for the Minister of Family Services. They are also in relation to our recent televised hearing on the annual report of the Representative for Children and Youth.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a quote from the annual report where the child and youth representative states, "Having received a list of the critical

injuries and deaths of young people that have occurred over the past five years from the Department of Family Services, I was shocked at the frequency and extent of violence and physical and sexual abuse noted.”

Mr. Speaker, I have been raising this issue as a critical concern almost from the first day I took office as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the current rate of child sexual abuse is of course unacceptable, but more importantly it is at crisis levels. I would like to ask: does the minister agree that the current rate and prevalence of child sexual abuse is at a crisis level? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Member responsible for the Department of Family Services, Minister Sheutiapik.

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik

(interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your question. It is not an easy topic and it's very difficult to talk about, but I really hope that we will be able continue to discuss this issue with one another.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, it has been in crisis for quite some time. Otherwise, why would we have created Umingmak? It's not new; child sexual abuse is not new to the territory. It has existed and yes, it is a crisis. I appreciate you bringing it into this House because when you do, it shows there is a true interest and care for our people, especially our youth. Yes, it is in crisis and has been for quite some time.
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank and appreciate the minister's response. Mr. Speaker, as I previously indicated, the horrific experiences and traumatic events that these child victims are suffering will leave lifelong scars, and I fear that these same child victims do not receive sufficient counselling services to assist them on the road to recovery.

I would like to ask: can the minister tell us how often the Department of Family Services social workers or other child protection workers refer cases of child abuse to mental health workers or youth counselling specialists? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Sheutiapik.

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik

(interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Thank you for that question. Unfortunately I don't have that kind of detail.

I can tell the member, though, that our department has been very active when it comes to child abuse and neglect in a sense. We have the Nunavut Child Abuse and Neglect Response Agreement, where we are continuing an ongoing supplementary handbook to ensure that our frontline workers know signs and symptoms of abuse. All this stems from the work leading up to Umingmak, of course, and I'm proud to say that even under Umingmak, under our youth initiative, we do provide funding for Umingmak.

Then the work going on with the RCMP; in April 2021 a territory-wide duty to report visual presentation was delivered to all RCMP detachments in the territory. I mention this because it is very important, Mr. Speaker. Then in January 2021 a working group was formed that included membership of our department hosted by the RCMP to discuss the implementation of family violence and at-risk tools. Saying that, the group discussed the need for protocol for how the RCMP and the department could collaborate better around high risks to ensure safety of children and families in Nunavut.

Our workers continue to provide ongoing support to children and youth for a variety of reasons when working with the RCMP, interview techniques and so forth. There has been a lot of work under this file. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for providing an update on the ongoing progress.

One issue that the Department of Family Services has been plagued with is insufficient data tracking. That's a challenge that the Department of Family Services has been confronted with for longer than this current Assembly has existed. That was an issue that was brought up in our first review or televised hearing with the child and youth representative, as well as during our more recent televised review with the child and youth representative.

This January, during this televised hearing, we heard how prior to sophisticated electronic case management systems, governments were more than capable of providing statistical information to allow government leaders to provide informed decisions. I would like to ask the minister if she would be able to provide us with an update today on what efforts have been put forward to help address the data tracking issues within the Department of Family Services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Sheutiapik.

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I really appreciate that question as well. As you know, we have been working on a case management system and there have been delays with the software, which resulted in terminating our contract with the initial contractor to provide this service. Currently the department is working with CGS and discussions with the Northwest Territories. We're hoping that a request for decision will be going out before November. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Oral Questions. The Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Question 1421 – 5(2): COVID-19 Vaccination Disinformation in Nunavut

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me again. I have a question for the Minister of Health.

Firstly, I wish to thank the minister for the statement earlier this morning about the COVID vaccine, and in my opinion, this inoculation has benefits for the people here in Nunavut.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times I have heard the minister, the Premier, federal political leaders...last night there was every federal political leader in Canada together telling people to get the vaccine. We've had religious leaders, we've had Inuit organization leaders saying, "Get the vaccine," and we're left here and we look at the numbers of vaccinations across Nunavut and, as the minister stated, we can do better.

I am concerned that these messages from our leaders are falling on deaf ears and I'm really puzzled why Nunavut does not have higher vaccination rates at this point. We're headed into the winter, we all know this is a dangerous time of year in terms of the flu, let alone COVID-19, and I'm concerned that the message is not getting through to many Nunavummiut.

Speaking with my constituents, encouraging them to get the vaccine, one of the things I have heard are rumours about adverse reactions to the vaccine. I'll use an example. "Oh, this person, I heard that my neighbour's cousin couldn't walk after he got the vaccine. He couldn't walk for two days. My neighbour's cousin had this reaction and that's why I'm not getting the vaccine." That's an example of the type of rumours that are circulating at the community level that I am concerned are affecting the vaccine uptake.

I'll try to boil it down. I'll ask the Minister of Health: what is more risky? Is COVID-19 more of a risk to Nunavummiut's health or is the vaccine more of a risk to Nunavummiut's health? Which one is more dangerous?
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The Hon. Minister responsible for the Department of Health, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not getting the vaccine is really risky. I know there are anti-vaxxers out there that believe that everything from "They had COVID, so therefore they have immunity to the thing" to "It's all a hoax anyway." I don't know how many doctors and nurses it's going to take, and politicians, to let us know that the vaccine is not going to hurt you. In fact it will help you and it will help those that are not able to get it because you have the vaccine. To answer your question, it's a lot safer and healthier to for you to take the vaccine than not. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Your first supplementary, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) If we look at Canada right now in terms of vaccination rates, unfortunately Nunavut is at the bottom or one of the lowest in the country in terms of the number of people who have been eligible to be vaccinated and who are vaccinated.

One of the other jurisdictions that are at the bottom is Alberta. The Government of Alberta recently announced a \$100 incentive program per unvaccinated

person. If you get vaccinated, they provide a voucher, I believe, for \$100. That's an example of an incentive to get more people through the door to get more needles into arms.

Is the territorial government or the Department of Health considering an incentive program, whether it's a lottery or a cash incentive, to increase vaccine uptake in Nunavut? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have not had major discussions around the incentive portion of the vaccination. We are encouraging people to go and get vaccinated at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Let me add that it is very important that we have the vaccinations done now. We have more than enough to vaccinate every Nunavummiuq that could be vaccinated at this time. I will not be able to say that come November and December, when some of the vaccinations we do have will begin to expire, Mr. Speaker. It's very important that people who are on the fence and wondering if they should get the vaccine should get the vaccine now because some of the vaccines we do have are dated.

I am hopeful that within the next couple of weeks when we have the QR cards coming out that that will encourage people who are on the fence to actually go and get the vaccination. It will literally open doors for you when you fly south and it will make it a lot easier for you to get around in this country and the world, but I encourage you, if you have

not done so, please go and get the vaccination. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Thank you. Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Thank you, minister. As I mentioned earlier, I really do appreciate the messaging, but I'm concerned that the message is not getting through. As they say, money talks, and I believe that's what the Government of Alberta, who appear to be quite desperate to increase the number of vaccinated individuals, is doing. Again, I have raised this in previous sittings. I'll again encourage the government to look at incentives. This has been done at the municipal level in Arviat and Whale Cove to some success, to my knowledge.

My last question is about requiring proof of vaccination for non-essential services. This is something that other jurisdictions in Canada are doing and it may help more individuals get vaccinated. Is the Department of Health considering establishing a requirement for proof of vaccination to non-essential services in Nunavut in order to increase vaccinated numbers of Nunavummiut? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a discussion that is ongoing within the departments and through our COVID team is to have that very discussion that my colleague is talking about, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you. I want to remind members that the amount of time allotted for question period has expired and we will move on with the orders of the day. Item 7. Written Questions. Item 8. Returns to Written Questions. Item 9. Replies to Opening Address. Item 10. Petitions. Item 11. Responses to Petitions. Item 12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. Item 13. Tabling of Documents. Item 14. Notices of Motions. Item 15. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. 16. Motions. Item 17. First Reading of Bills. Item 18. Second Reading of Bills. Item 19. Consideration of the Committee of the Whole... . Mr. Akoak.

Motion 123 – 5(2): Early Adjournment

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Rule 46, I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa, that the House adjourn for the day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you. The motion is in order and is not subject to debate. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried and we will proceed to Item 22. *Orders of the Day.* Mr. Clerk.

Item 22: Orders of the Day

Clerk (Mr. Quirke): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a reminder of meetings for this afternoon: at half past one, the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations will be meeting, followed by a meeting of the Regular Members' Caucus at half past three, both meetings are in the Nanuq Boardroom, and for Saturday, a meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislation

commences at nine o'clock in the Nanuq Boardroom, and in the afternoon at half past one, a meeting of the Management and Services Board.

Orders of the Day for September 13:

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. Petitions
11. Responses to Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motions
15. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 77

20. Report of the Committee of the
Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

22. Orders of the Day

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you. This House stands adjourned until Monday, September 13, at 1:30 p.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House adjourned at 10:50*

