

NUNAVUT HANSARD
UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2023
IQALUIT, NUNAVUT

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Corrections:

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CLERK**

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

Speaker

Hon. Tony Akoak
(Gjoa Haven)

Hon. David Akeeagok
(Quttiktuq)

Minister of Environment; Minister of Economic Development and Transportation; Minister of Energy

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok
(Iqaluit-Niaqunnguu)

Premier; Minister of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs; Minister responsible for Immigration; Minister responsible for Indigenous Affairs; Minister responsible for the Utility Rates Review Council

Bobby Anavilok
(Kugluktuk)

Janet Brewster
(Iqaluit-Sinaa)

Hon. Pamela Gross
(Cambridge Bay)

Deputy Premier; Minister of Education; Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College

George Hickes
(Iqaluit-Tasiluk)

Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole

Hon. David Joanasie
(South Baffin)

Government House Leader; Minister of Community and Government Services

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Adam Lightstone
(Iqaluit-Manirajak)

Hon. John Main
(Arviat North-Whale Cove)
Minister of Health; Minister responsible for Suicide Prevention

Solomon Malliki
(Aivilik)

Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk
(Pangnirtung)

Minister of Family Services; Minister responsible for Homelessness; Minister of Human Resources;

Minister responsible for the Status of Women; Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission

Officers
Clerk
John Quirke

Hon. Joanna Quassa
(Aggu)

Minister of Culture and Heritage; Minister of Languages; Minister responsible for Seniors

Inagayuk Quqqiaq
(Netsilik)

Alexander Sammurtok
(Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet)

Joe Savikataaq
(Arviat South)

Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole

Hon. Craig Simailak
(Baker Lake)

Minister of Justice; Minister responsible for Labour; Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation

*Iqaluit, Nunavut, X0A 0H0
Tel (867) 975-5000 Fax (867) 975-5190 Toll-Free (877) 334-7266
Website: www.assembly.nu.ca*

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Iqaluit, Nunavut
Friday, February 24, 2023

Members Present:

Hon. David Akeeagok, Hon. P.J. Akeeagok, Hon. Tony Akoak, Mr. Bobby Anavilok, Ms. Janet Brewster, Hon. Pamela Gross, Hon. David Joanasie, Mr. Joelie Kaerner, Ms. Mary Killiktee, Hon. Lorne Kusugak, Mr. Adam Lightstone, Hon. John Main, Mr. Solomon Malliki, Hon. Margaret Nakashuk, Ms. Karen Nutarak, Mr. Daniel Qavvik, Hon. Joanna Quassa, Mr. Inagayuk Quqqiaq, Mr. Alexander Sammurtok, Mr. Joe Savikataaq, Hon. Craig Simailak.

>>*House commenced at 8:59*

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Tony Akoak)(interpretation): Good morning. Before we proceed, Ms. Quassa, can you say the opening prayer, please.

>>*Prayer*

Speaker (interpretation): Good morning, my colleagues. If my family members in Gjoa Haven are watching the proceedings, as it just tuned seven o'clock there, I say "good morning" to them.

(interpretation ends) Item 2. Ministers' Statements. Hon. Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Item 2: Ministers' Statements

Minister's Statement 140 – 6(2): Elders Strategy

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Good morning. (interpretation ends) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, my colleagues and Nunavummiutait who are listening in this morning.

Mr. Speaker, *Katujjiluta* identifies elders and "aging with dignity in Nunavut" as a key priority area. Our mandate promises to develop a comprehensive elder and senior care strategy with broad input from elders, families, communities, and partners.

I'm proud to announce that work is well underway towards a Strategic Action Plan for Elders in Nunavut.

>>*Applause*

We have contracted Iqaluit consultant Mary Wilman to work in tandem with the Iqaluit-based company Lichen Consulting to do this review. We aim to complete the new framework by December. Elders groups are being engaged at regional gatherings in

North Qikiqtaaluk, South Qikiqtaaluk, the Kivalliq, the Kitikmeot, and Ottawa. The first consultation was just held in Rankin Inlet on February 14 and 15.

Mr. Speaker, this engagement is being delivered in Inuktitut and is facilitated with the support of Elder Advisors Elisapi Davidee-Angingmiuq, Miriam Aglukkaq, and Rosemary Sandy.

The next consultations will be from March 8 and 9 in Cambridge Bay; the week of March 20 in Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet); April 18 and 19 in Iqaluit; and the week of May 8 in Ottawa.

While we work to open long-term care centres to bring our elders home, we know there are also gaps in service and supports for our elders who are here now. This strategy will look to coordinate existing supports in communities and help elders navigate programs and services delivered by the Government of Nunavut, Inuit organizations, municipalities, and not-for-profits.

Nunavummiut who are aging deserve to see improvements in their daily experiences. This starts long before the need for specialized care. Guided by our *Katujjiluta* mandate, our government will work to ensure our parents and grandparents are able to age in comfort and safety at home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, Ms. Nakashuk.

Minister's Statement 141 – 6(2): Path Towards Safety

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Good morning, my colleagues. I also say “good morning” to Nunavummiut.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, 2022 marked the end of the Workers' Compensation and Safety Commission's strategic planning cycle. During that cycle, the commission was committed to advancing safety culture and delivering quality services and outcomes. Over those five years there was a steady decrease in the frequency of time-loss injuries, which are injuries that cause a loss in productive work time. Although many factors impacted this decrease, it represents advancement in workers' and employers' knowledge about occupational health and safety and creating safe workplaces.

The commission is now advancing with our 2023-27 strategic plan, entitled *Paths Towards Safety*. It includes three main priorities. The first, advancing safety outcomes, is a priority to eliminate workplace diseases and injuries by supporting safe workplaces, raising awareness of safety rights and responsibilities, and to prevent and reduce workplace accidents and injuries.

The second priority is delivering quality services by enhancing processes and empowering staff to provide timely, accessible, understandable, effective and culturally safe services and clear communication.

The final priority is ensuring financial sustainability so that every injured worker is cared for now and into the future. The commission must maintain sufficient funds in the Workers' Protection Fund, which covers the cost of current and future injured worker claims. This fund covers injured worker claims costs by using a fiscally responsible funding mechanism that is fair to all employers.

Paths Towards Safety represents the many different approaches the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission takes to make Nunavut's workplaces safer every day.
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister of Justice, Mr. Simailak.

Minister's Statement 142 – 6(2): Removal of Long Guns from Bill C-21

Hon. Craig Simailak: Good morning, all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to share that the Government of Canada has withdrawn amendments to Bill C-21...

>>Applause

...which were proposed in November 2022. The amendments proposed prohibitions to long guns and shotguns that could have resulted in restrictions to firearms commonly used by hunters in Nunavut.

In the past few months the Government of Nunavut has expressed our concerns about restricting long guns to our partners in the federal government. At every given opportunity, we made it clear to our federal colleagues that the use of these firearms is a necessity for the livelihood of our communities and Inuit hunters.

>>Applause

The Government of Canada must avoid restrictions which prohibit the tools used by Nunavut hunters and they must ensure respect for the constitutionally protected rights of Inuit harvesters.

We are glad that our federal partners have heard our concerns and have recognized the importance of further consultation and dialogue on proposed restrictions. Withdrawing these amendments was the right decision and we look forward to continued work with the Government of Canada on this important issue.

>>*Applause*

Our government will look for every opportunity to bring the concerns of Nunavummiut to our partners in Ottawa and ensure the interests of Nunavummiut are heard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister of Community and Government Services, Mr. Joanasie.

Minister's Statement 143 – 6(2): NAM Annual General Meeting

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Nunavummiut and members.

Mr. Speaker, in November 2022 my department took part in the 55th Gathering of Municipalities that took place in Iqaluit. It was the Nunavut Association of Municipalities' first face-to-face annual general meeting in two years. The conference provided an opportunity for municipal leaders, Inuit organizations, territorial and business leaders to collaborate and discuss topics that are critical to each municipality and the territory's future.

Mr. Speaker, the theme of the conference was "Together Towards Tomorrow." The essence of Piliriqatigiinniq was embodied by my fellow attendees as we all advocate and pursue the best interests of our communities and Nunavut as a whole.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud the advocacy of the key areas of support sought by the association and its membership and thank them for allowing me to present and engage with them in person. I want to acknowledge the advocacy of the association for more funding and support in critical areas of community development.

Mr. Speaker, my department is committed to developing partnerships, nurturing relationships, and promoting the autonomy of our local governments.

(interpretation) Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my cabinet colleagues for attending this annual general meeting as well. I look forward to working closely with the association and local governments to achieve the mandate priorities of this government and the priorities of the Nunavut Association of Municipalities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Minister's Statement 144 – 6(2): Budget Priorities

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Good morning, my colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, today I would like to provide a few highlights and an overview from Health's proposed 2023-24 budget. We are proposing a budget increase of \$23.4 million, bringing our total ask to \$469.5 million. This proposed budget increase shows Health's commitment to improved staffing, programs, health care delivery, elder care, and administration.

Out of this budget increase, \$11.9 million will support the continued growth of health care human resource capacity and service development territory-wide. We are proposing 23 new positions focused on capacity development and Inuit employment across the territory. Nineteen of these positions are located outside of Iqaluit. These positions include 11 new basic radiological/laboratory technician positions that will enhance diagnostic capabilities for clients. This innovative and training-linked program will assist us in continuing to deliver care closer to home.

Uqaqtitsijii, our community health centres are seeing ever-increasing demand for services as the population of Nunavut grows. We want to strengthen our staff and operational capacity in health centres across the territory. To that end, Health is proposing \$8.6 million for multiple initiatives, including new virtual care service supports; better point-of-care lab testing and use of technology; expanding the Nursing Resource Program; strengthening midwifery programming; and providing paramedics within our health centres.

Long-term care for Nunavut elders remains a central priority for this government and for my department. In line with *Katujjiluta*'s focus on collaboration with Inuit organizations and with other levels of government, Health has been working on innovative and creative procurement opportunities to improve the care available to elders. This work has the potential to see non-governmental entities to assume the responsibility for both the future construction of long-term care facilities as well as providing care services within those facilities. The proposed '23-24 budget includes monies towards the operation of the new Rankin Inlet Long-term Care Facility, and our goal is to have the first Nunavut elders take residence in the winter of 2024.

Additional funds in our '23-24 proposed budget will go toward strengthening the use of Inuktitut in health communications and outreach; preparing for implementation of the *Mental Health Act*; providing enhanced security at some health centres; and supporting transient housing for Iqaluit Health Services.

These are the highlights, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to discussing further details in Committee of the Whole later today. On a final note, I would like to thank all the dedicated employees and valued partnering organizations who contribute to our health

care system in Nunavut on a daily basis. I look forward to continuing our important work together as proposed in the '23-24 budget. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College, Ms. Gross.

Minister's Statement 145 – 6(2): Inuinnaqtun Language Courses

Hon. Pamela Gross: *Quana*, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Nunavummiut and everybody here with us today.

Mr. Speaker, our territory will celebrate Inuktut Language Month in April. In preparation and anticipation of promoting and enhancing our indigenous languages of our territory, I would like to inform Nunavummiut that Nunavut Arctic College has restarted the delivery of its Inuinnaqtun language classes.

The college will offer Inuinnaqtun language classes in Cambridge Bay from February 20 to March 25. Inuinnaqtun levels 1 through 3 will be offered consecutively. Level 1 is an opportunity to develop comfort in conversation. Level 2 continues the development of speaking skills, listening, reading and writing skills. Finally, Level 3 focuses on developing an understanding of the writing system, as well as sentence patterns and sounds.

Mr. Speaker, these courses are recognized by the University of Victoria and can be used towards a certificate in language revitalization. We would like to recognize the Department of Culture and Heritage for their support in language training, specifically their administration of the Inuktut Language Implementation Fund. These partnerships support the *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* principle of Piliriqatigiinniq, working together. To support the program, student tuition fees and related travel and accommodation costs are covered.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to support our indigenous languages through the delivery of these programs, we encourage those interested in enrolling to reach out to the Registrar at the Kitikmeot Campus, Sheila Reyes. Please reach out a minimum of a week before the course start date to Ms. Reyes at sreyes@arcticcollege.ca or by phone at 867-983-7000.

Mr. Speaker, as an advocate, I would like to say “*quanaqpiaqquhi*” to those who make these courses possible. My gratitude goes out to those who pass on our language and to the students who are eager to learn. *Quana*, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Members' Statements. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet...oh, I'm sorry. Members' Statements. Member for Hudson Bay, Mr. Qavvik.

Item 3: Members' Statements**Member's Statement 188 – 6(2): New Housing for Health Staff**

Mr. Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues *ammalu* Nunavummiut.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my appreciation for the new housing units in Sanikiluaq which have been allocated to our health centre staff.

On December 15, 2022 four housing units, two two-bedroom and two one-bedroom, were opened. It was very good news for our nursing staff who were able to occupy the units right away. This makes a lot of sense as they are now within walking distance to the new health centre.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to recognize our government when they do something that makes good sense. Housing has been a long-standing issue for the nurses in Sanikiluaq. Having well-situated housing units allocated to our health staff will certainly ease some tension around filling our nursing positions.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the unrelenting advocacy of my predecessor, Mr. Allan Rumbolt, the former MLA for Sanikiluaq, on the health staff housing issue.

>>*Applause*

Mr. Speaker, this is one good news story, but I must point out that many more housing units are needed in the community of Sanikiluaq. Difficulties in filling such positions as mental health worker and community social service worker positions are all tied to the lack of staff housing in the community.

I strongly encourage our government to explore all possibilities to provide housing for our frontline service workers. It is not simply the accommodation of critical staff that is at stake, but also the health and wellness of community residents who rely on the service they can provide. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Members' Statements. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Mr. Sammurtok.

Member's Statement 189 – 6(2): Chesterfield Inlet Arctic Winter Games Participants

Mr. Sammurtok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to the people of Chesterfield Inlet and Rankin Inlet.

(interpretation ends) I would like to acknowledge the following athletes that were in the Arctic Winter Games: from Chesterfield Inlet Torsten Qajaaq Ittinuar, arm pull silver ulu, James Tautu, Alaska high kick senior, silver ulu, also from Rankin Inlet hockey under 19, Justin Issakiark, Terence Pilakapsi, Sandy Towtongie, Maximus Ammaq, Kadin Eetuk. Kobe Tanuyak, Gregory Wiseman, Ray Jr. Pudlat, head coach David Clarke, and assistant coach Graham Kusugak. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Members' Statements. Member for Tununiq, Ms. Nutarak.

Member's Statement 190 – 6(2): Pond Inlet Arctic Winter Games Participants

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to express the feeling of gratification towards the young athletes who participated in the Arctic Winter Games, specifically the athletes who travelled from Pond Inlet as I didn't have an opportunity to speak to this issue on our first day of this session.

Evan Kyak, Chad Kilukishak, and Joshua Shappa, went down for the volleyball games, and the coach was Brady Fisher from Pond Inlet, and for (interpretation ends) table tennis (interpretation) we had Nicholas Shappa, who received several ulus; one silver and two bronzes. We were very pleased with these athletes, and quite proud of them, and they were fun to watch during their games.

When you watch young people play sports, it has a side effect as it encourages other young people to get into sports. So, I urge young people to get into sports. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Members' Statements. Member for Kugluktuk, Mr. Anavilok.

Member's Statement 191 – 6(2): Inuinnaqtun Language Classes

Mr. Anavilok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say "good day" to the people of Kugluktuk, Nunavummiut, and to my colleagues here.

I wish to start off firstly by mentioning my daughter, who designs and sews calico parkas, as I am very appreciative of her efforts. Also, there is a local course being offered in Kugluktuk at the adult centre by local athletes Jasmine Bolt and Alisa Milton. They are offering a course to introduce and teach Inuinnaqtun dialect as a pilot project and they are also looking for future courses at the centre and I am very grateful to them for their initiative.

(interpretation ends) I want to recognize Jasmine Bolt and Alisa Milton for advocating for the inclusion of Inuinnaqtun in language classes in the high school. I would like to

thank them, very much, and continue it and keep trying. (interpretation) Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Members' Statements. I have no more names. Item 4. Returns to Oral Questions. Item 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Member for Pangnirtung, Ms. Nakashuk.

Item 5: Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I am happy to announce that we have some visitors in the House from the WSCC office. First, I want to acknowledge Debbie Malloy, WSCC President and CEO.

>>*Applause*

And Kwame Neba, Vice President of WSCC in Nunavut.

>>*Applause*

Unfortunately, Minister Chinna from the NWT couldn't arrive yesterday, so I apologize that she couldn't be here.

I also want to welcome staff from Pauktuutit, who just had their AGM here in Iqaluit, and it is an honour to have them here in the House. President Gerri Sharpe, Executive Director, Rosemary Cooper, Delegate Ooleepika Shoo and Malaya Zehr, who is the Executive Secretary for Pauktuutit. (interpretation) Welcome.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Welcome to the Assembly. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Member for Iqaluit-Niaqunnguu, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, good morning, Mr. Speaker. I am proud today to be able to stand and recognize the President of Pauktuutit, Gerri Sharpe. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly. I would also like to acknowledge Rosemary Cooper from Pauktuutit, who has pleasantly returned home to Iqaluit for work. Welcome home to Iqaluit.

>>*Applause*

I would also like to welcome delegate Ooleepika Shoo, as well as the Executive Secretary for Pauktuutit, Malaya Zehr. Thank you very much for coming, and welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Welcome to the Assembly. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, everybody. I'm really happy to see everybody here in our gallery, and I'll start by recognizing Gerri Sharpe, who has already been recognized and is a member of my family, an extended family member. Ooleepika Shoo, who is about to become a GN employee, or is currently a GN employee working remotely.

Ooleepika is working remotely for us in Ottawa.

Rosemary Cooper, who is the very first Inuk Executive Director of Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association.

>>*Applause*

Ms. Zehr, who I worked with at my time in medical and travel programs, welcome.

Kwame Neba, with WSCC. Debbie Molloy, also with WSCC, who I very much enjoyed working with.

As well, I should mention that Ms. Sharpe is also an employee of WSCC, but she works in Yellowknife. Welcome to our chambers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Welcome to the Assembly. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. I have no more names. Item 6. Oral Questions. Member for Hudson Bay, Mr. Qavvik.

Item 6: Oral Questions

Question 278 – 6(2): Housing for Frontline Staff

Mr. Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Family Services.

Mr. Speaker, I recently wrote to the minister regarding the lack of a permanent social services worker for the community of Sanikiluaq. I would like to thank the minister for her reply.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's response indicated that filling that community's social services worker position has been set back by the lack of housing in the community of Sanikiluaq.

Can the minister provide an update on how many community social service worker positions across Nunavut are currently vacant due to such circumstances as the lack of housing in a community? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Family Services, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for asking that question. We just discussed this quite recently about social workers for the communities. Sanikiluaq is not the only community going through the shortage of staff. If I remember correctly, there are about five communities that are lacking social workers that need to have social workers brought in from other communities. They are usually visited by the Rankin Inlet regional headquarters. As for the staff from the Kitikmeot, they get their staff from Cambridge Bay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Qavvik.

Mr. Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the response, minister. As I noted in my member's statement, having new housing units in Sanikiluaq dedicated to our nursing staff is an important step in relieving the tension around filling nursing positions in the community. It took a lot of lobbying to get the government to allocate these units appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister describe what steps he has taken to get housing units allocated to such frontline staff as community social services workers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Family Services, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Thank you for the second question. I'm happy that you asked that question because it's not just Family Services that has this issue.

When we're talking about staff shortages all across Nunavut, social services is one of them. I have worked with CGS minister as well, and using my other hat as the HR minister, as well as the Minister of Health, because I understand some of the staff housing issues can combine with Health staff.

So we've been trying to see what we can do to accommodate social workers in the communities, and I know with Sanikiluaq, we are trying to find the best available accommodation for the employees once we find one. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your final supplementary, Mr. Qavvik.

Mr. Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that there are limited resources, and limited housing units available. However, I have also seen that vocal and persistent

advocating on behalf of our critical service providers can encourage our government to make sensible decisions about housing allocations.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to working with the Department of Human Resources and the Nunavut Housing Corporation to ensure that efforts to fill our critical frontline positions are not held back because there are no housing units that are allocated to those positions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Family Services, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for asking that question. It's true, what you're saying, we are trying to do things about it, and trying to see how we can improve the situation.

I know we want to solve it soon, and I recognize that the fact that having no social worker in Sanikiluaq was very difficult, and unfortunately, other communities have to go through that right now too.

We always try to find housing for our staff in the Department of Human Resources, and when staff quit and leave, their old staff housing unit is taken over by other departments, and that has been part of the problem. We hope to find solutions for that soon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Tununiq, Ms. Nutarak.

Question 279 – 6(2): Fishing Sector

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will direct my question to the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, whose department is responsible for fisheries and sealing.

(interpretation ends) As the minister will recall, he and I both participated in the last summer's grand opening of Pond Inlet's new community harbour.

I again want to express my appreciation to the minister for taking the time to come to Mittimatalik, and I again want to express my appreciation to the territorial and the federal governments for investing in the strategic infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the fisheries sector and blue economy are critical elements of a brighter future for our residents, and marine infrastructure like the new harbour in Pond Inlet are an important part of this strategy.

Can the minister highlight what specific new investments in the fishing sector have been included as part of this year's budget? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Within this budget we already have allocation for fisheries and development that we're going to continue to help communities in getting into the fisheries sector.

We're also working very closely with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and the federal government to try and get more fisheries-related activities to happen in Nunavut. There are a number of plans that, through our memorandum of understanding with Greenland, that we'll be doing.

Although there are no new dollars being identified within this budget, the budget that we have is sufficient for us to continue to advocate and move forward. We're trying to leverage that for more opportunities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) New reports indicate that the federal government has recently made a unilateral decision to cut certain turbot fishing quotas in the waters between Nunavut and Greenland.

Can the minister confirm what the territorial government position is regarding this issue. Can he clarify what specific action is being taken to support our fishing sector in response to the quota cut? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for raising this. We were very disappointed when we heard that the turbot is being cut. It is being cut as a result of the Government of Canada's lack of research abilities to continue their research in the waters between Greenland and Canada.

We will continue to advocate that proper research is needed done and our fisheries is critical to making sure.... I think all the fishing industries, along with us, all have the same voice that we are going to continue to advocate for the federal government to do their job. They need to their job in order for us to be successful. Not having that research is hindering our growth. That's very disappointing.

I thank the member for raising this and allowing me to express our views. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) As the minister is aware, one of the specific priorities that are included in the *Katujjiluta*

mandate is to “Re-appropriate fisheries licenses and purchase more fisheries quotas.” Can the minister clarify how much funding has been allocated in his department’s budget to purchase more fishing quotas? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am working with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association to repatriate our licenses. They have taken the lead on this and we provide support on it. We continue to meet about it and try to advocate for it. At this time I don’t have a progress report. It has been very slow, but it’s something that we won’t give up on until our allocations are brought back to our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Question 280 – 6(2): Office of the Chief Coroner

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good day, Iqalummiut and Nunavummiut, and I hope everybody was safe during yesterday’s blizzard and will continue to be safe over the weekend.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice and they concern the issue of the Office of the Chief Coroner.

Mr. Speaker, suicides and homicides, including domestic violence-related homicides, are all too common in our communities. Mr. Speaker, I have previously raised these very important issues a number of times in this House. I also tabled recommendations made by the Office of the Chief Coroner to help prevent domestic violence-related deaths. Mr. Speaker, having this very important information publicly available on an annual basis would be in the best interest of the public and this government. Typically these statistics and recommendations that may prevent a similar death are included in a coroner’s report.

Mr. Speaker, the 2011 Annual Report of the Office of Nunavut’s Chief Coroner was tabled in this Legislative Assembly on March 19, 2014. Unfortunately no other annual reports from this office have been tabled since that time. The minister has previously indicated that tabling an annual report is not a statutory requirement and this is why reports from this office are not tabled in the House. I understand that the minister is not required to do this, but I hope that he will choose to do this.

I would like to ask: will the minister commit to doing the right thing and resume the practice of tabling the Office of the Chief Coroner’s annual reports? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Justice, Mr. Simailak.

Hon. Craig Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question. It's understandable that some of this data would be useful in some instances, but it is statutorily not a requirement and there are some other situations that need to be taken into consideration, such as privacy issues. I can commit to looking into it to see if it would be a good idea or not, but that's as far as I will go for now on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the minister's response and I'm glad that the minister will be looking into it. I understand that privacy is always a major issue and it's not something that anyone in this House would like to see breached. However, our counterparts in the Northwest Territories regularly table their coroner's annual reports for the benefit of their communities and as well for government services.

Unfortunately the Northwest Territories chief coroner recently released the number of suicides in 2021 and 2022, ahead of his annual report, due to an alarmingly high number of suicides. My thoughts are with the Northwest Territories and their communities during this incredibly difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, in order for our government to respond appropriately to such tragedies, we need to be tracking and recording this information to understand where we currently stand. When we as a government are better informed, we are in a better position to implement preventative measures, recommendations, and provide appropriate programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, as I previously indicated, the last annual report that was tabled in the Legislative Assembly was for the 2011 fiscal year. I would like to ask: can the minister confirm whether or not the coroner's reports have been produced internally but not released since the 2011 annual report? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Justice, Mr. Simailak.

Hon. Craig Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question. The coroner does do reports annually internally. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I go on, I just want to say that it is very difficult to bring up such sensitive issues, such as those that our coroners have to deal with, but I do feel like it is important that this issue be raised. Our community coroners as well as our chief coroner have a very crucial role to play in our communities in investigating deaths as well as determining cause and producing recommendations to ensure that similar deaths or incidents may be prevented in the future.

Mr. Speaker, for this reason, other jurisdictions table annual reports as well as coroners' investigations that they conduct throughout the year specifically for the benefit of the

governments that they represent but also for the general public. Mr. Speaker, the recommendations that the coroners' investigations produce are very important and should be made public.

Mr. Speaker, returning to the NWT, their chief coroner had decided that it was in the public's best interest to release statistical information in advance of the annual report being produced and tabled in their Assembly. Mr. Speaker, in the NWT, as I previously indicated, there was a spike in suicides, which led to the coroner determining that it was in the public's best interest to release this information.

Mr. Speaker, in 2021 there were 11 suicides in the Northwest Territories and in 2022 there were 18. Mr. Speaker, those figures are likely far below our own suicide rates in those calendar years. Mr. Speaker, for my last question, I would like to ask: what were Nunavut's suicide rates for those given years and why is our chief coroner not doing more to release this information and make recommendations to prevent these occurrences from occurring? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Justice, Mr. Simailak.

Hon. Craig Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question and continued advocacy for Nunavummiut. That's a bit detailed request he's asking for; I would have to get back to him with those responses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Arviat South, Mr. Savikataaq.

Question 281 – 6(2): Community Wellness Funding

Mr. Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the people of Arviat, I say "good morning" to you. Before I begin, we wish our *ukuaq* a happy birthday today. I hope you enjoy your day. If you have the time, my daughter, please make your mom a cake.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I would like to revisit my question of the Minister of Health. The minister's response left more questions than answers. This is too much of an important issue just to let go with the 1,100 youths in Arviat and the money that's in jeopardy here for the summer camp program, where 180 youths take advantage of, and the drop-in centre where 70 to 80 youths visit six days a week.

Mr. Speaker, the good things or the bad things of emails, it's in black and white and it's indisputable, and I would just like to revisit that. One of the minister's officials wrote; this is about the community wellness program funding for the Hamlet of Arviat, the official wrote, "We have decided to seek other sponsoring agencies to take on community wellness programs funding. Starting April 1, 2023, the Hamlet of Arviat will no longer be receiving funding specifically for community wellness programs." That's what the email says.

The minister stated in the *Blues*; I know these are unedited, but these are the *Blues* from the Minister of Health, “...there is no intention that I’m aware of to change the allocation that’s going to Arviat, currently to the Hamlet of Arviat, that would be redirected anywhere else. It will still go earmarked for the community of Arviat.”

Can the minister please state which one... ? Is the email correct or is the minister’s statement correct? Just a clarification. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) The member opposite was copied on a piece of correspondence from the Hamlet of Arviat to my office and I believe that was last week and since then, I haven’t heard anything from the member in terms of seeking information. As most of the members opposite commonly do, I’m available through text, I’m available on the phone, I’m available by email, and I try to make myself as available as possible to the regular members.

However, the member opposite chose to wait until the sitting of the House to seek information and I respect the member’s right to do so. However, in this case where there is a lot of detail involved, I feel it might not be the most constructive way to look into this issue. I’m limited in terms of what I can say and what I want to say here. I don’t want to get into the details. I don’t want to micromanage a \$242 million program. I’m not in the business of micromanaging that.

In terms of the clarification, I can provide that to the member, perhaps outside of the Assembly, and we can have a detailed, constructive conversation in terms of what he would like to see. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The letter I was copied on was dated February 15, so there hasn’t been a whole lot of time. The minister stated that he’s available at all times and I would hope that he would be available here to my constituents of Arviat to explain the rationale of the decision the department has made. I’m willing to sit down and talk with the minister and I’m not asking the minister to micromanage \$247 million or what the minister said of the project.

I’m concerned about the funding that is going to the Hamlet of Arviat to do two very good programs that are well used by the youth in Arviat to keep them out of mischief, to keep them out of trouble, to keep them occupied. In the summertime when school is out, the seven-week summer camp program is very popular. There are more students that want to get into it than can participate and that funding is in jeopardy. According to the email, it will stop April 1. The drop-in centre, which is open six days a week and is used by 70 to 100 youth every single day of the six days of the week, is in jeopardy of not getting funding.

I can speak down to the minister and the minister also has not come forward to ask me after I questioned him in the House, so it works both ways. It's just that this funding is very important and I know the minister does not micromanage, but can he just clarify to the House and to the people of Arviat whether the hamlet is still going to receive the funding from the community wellness program as of April 1? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) The Nunavut Wellness Agreement, really, is an incredible funding resource for our territory and I would like to thank our federal partners at Indigenous Services Canada as well as key stakeholders that we collaborate with, including Nunavut Tunngavik, in terms of administering and managing this important funding.

Mr. Speaker, when we started off with the Nunavut Wellness Agreement, it was \$184 million over ten years. I am proud to say that there have been 18 amendments to that agreement and it has brought the total up to \$242 million into our territory. Mr. Speaker, it's very important funding, it goes towards food programs, it goes towards community wellness activities, and my staff work very hard with every community in Nunavut to administer that funding and make sure that it's going towards worthwhile causes.

Mr. Speaker, I'll end it there in terms of my response. If the member wants to ask further questions, he is free to do so. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for more elaboration on the \$242 million program that the federal government funds and I'm happy that the funds have gone up, but I'm concerned about portions of the fund that is going to the Arviat hamlet to fund two very successful and popular programs for the youth in Arviat.

The minister stated that he won't answer, but I'll try one last time. The people of Arviat and the hamlet deserve to know because they have to make plans. Will the Hamlet of Arviat still receive funding from the community wellness program as of April 1, 2023 to run these two very good programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I would refer the member to the *Blues* that he has in front of him. I previously attempted to respond to his questions, but I invite him to have a constructive conversation, perhaps outside of this House, and we can discuss as much detail as the member would like in terms of constructive dialogue that leads to solutions instead of necessarily other motives because we're all trying to get things done for the people of Nunavut, including the people of Arviat, and I think that's what we're all here for. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Amittuq, Mr. Kaernerk.

Question 282 – 6(2): Arctic Security and Sovereignty

Mr. Kaernerk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, members and Nunavummiut.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Premier of Nunavut concerning arctic security, (interpretation ends) arctic security and sovereignty.

Mr. Speaker, over the past two weeks, people in the north have had their eyes on the sky since hearing about the unidentified “balloon” or whatever they called it and it had an antenna, so I just wanted to clarify. Also to add on that, the Nunavut Senator has mentioned that it’s a wakeup call to the Arctic.

Mr. Speaker, on February 13 the Premier of Nunavut issued a press release that he looked forward to further collaboration between the northern territories and the Government of Canada to address arctic security issues.

Now, can the Premier provide an update on what recent discussions he has had with Minister Anand, the federal Minister of National Defence, with respect to arctic security and sovereignty and other topics that may be discussed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my colleague for asking a very good question. I think we all know that arctic security is really at the top of mind in terms of the global events that have been evolving, which started with the Ukraine invasion by Russia. It has really put a spotlight to the importance and the vulnerability of the Arctic from that lens.

Mr. Speaker, just two days ago I had a conversation with my colleagues, with the northern premiers, with Premier Pillai as well as Premier Cochrane, really, to talk about arctic security again. In that conversation, we did talk about wanting to bring in Minister Anand into the conversation to ensure that northerners, who really are at the forefront of these, are at the forefront. During those conversations, we look forward to writing another correspondence to Minister Anand, inviting Minister Anand to continue these collaborations in terms of the issues that we see across the north.

That’s the earliest conversation I’ve had with the northern premiers. I haven’t had a discussion with Minister Anand for quite some time, but I look forward to having the very important conversation with her as we advance the interests of Nunavummiut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Kaernerk.

Mr. Kaernerk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the Premier had a discussion with the northern premiers on this subject too.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Sanirajak has a long history with Canada's North Warning System since the Americans first established DEW lines across the Arctic. The station is still running and I would like to acknowledge the efforts made by Nasittuq, the contractor currently managing the site. They're hiring local people with the administration, heavy equipment, and other employment opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

Now, can the Premier indicate what steps will be taken to enhance surveillance of our northern skies and waters and whether additional employment opportunities will be made available to the community residents to get involved with these activities, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

Speaker: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again thank my colleague for asking that question. I, too, applaud the incredible work that Nasittuq does. It really touches upon the economic reconciliation that Canada could play. With the award that was presented back to Nasittuq, I think it was a true testament of what economic reconciliation could look like.

I could confirm, as we discussed, the future modernization of NORAD has been the discussion and the focal point of our conversation with Minister Anand as well as other northern premiers in terms of continuing that path and the incredible work that northern companies make in terms of the operations of the current DEW line sites. I believe that the last federal budget increased significantly the modernization of NORAD, but right now to date, we haven't seen any concrete movements in terms of how we will be factored into that.

We will always continue to push our federal counterparts to ensure that northerners play a significant role and especially, it's really through employment opportunities we see and I, too, want to thank the members and Sanirajak, among other communities across Nunavut who play such a crucial role to being the ears and eyes for Canada. With that in mind, I will continue to lobby hard to ensure that any modernization of NORAD includes northerners to be at the decision-making table. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Kaernerk.

Mr. Kaernerk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the Premier of Nunavut for stating that he will continue to focus on achieving that, as sovereignty in the Arctic and patrols are very important.

With saying that, Mr. Speaker, I also want to state this point. Lancaster Sound is more open these days, and it is being accessed by more and more ships, due to the

disappearance of multi-year ice in our northern waters which also opens up the waters for navigation, hence the interest to travel to these waters by non-Canadians from the world.

Now, in stating this point, Mr. Speaker, I wonder what role our Rangers can play as they can provide support in this area. They act as the eyes, ears and mouthpiece of Canada and in making that assertion, now I would like to ask.

Will the Premier emphasize further in this House, the opportunities arising from security and employment opportunities within Nunavut? It is something that I mentioned earlier for smaller communities, such as Igloolik and Sanirajak? How can you look into this further?

As you mentioned, you will work diligently towards this goal and, if so, would you invite Minister Anand to visit the community of Sanirajak to perhaps look at employment opportunities resulting from this initiative? This is following your statement that you will focus on this issue and will try to keep us updated on what is happening, both for the employment positions as well as territorial security. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Paulosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to again thank the member for the question. I agree with him totally that the Rangers are important. I was a Ranger, myself, as a Junior Ranger, and became a Sergeant. This was one of my activities when I lived in the community of Grise Fiord. We know Rangers will always have a pivotal role. I always mention to Minister Anand, and I have raised the issue also with Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, the fact that we need the infrastructure and the equipment needed towards these in our communities.

As my colleague mentioned, that we invite Minister Anand. I agree with him. In speaking with Minister Anand, the Prime Minister and Secretary General, at one time, were able to visit Cambridge Bay. Welcoming the officials is something that I always take as a priority.

It's always more appropriate to meet face to face, as opposed to by correspondence. I'm always welcoming federal ministers, and Minister Anand, no different, I will welcome her, and I will raise these issues from the question raised here in this House.

For example, I always mention the MLA for Sanirajak, and the issue of where we can move further. We may not have the details of where this will go, but I again, thank my colleague that he is always emphasizing this area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa, Ms. Brewster.

Question 283 – 6(2): Activities of the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to everybody in Nunavut, and like the Member from Iqaluit-Manirajak, I sincerely hope that everybody made it home safely in yesterday’s blizzard.

My questions today are for the Minister responsible for the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission.

I want to follow up today on issues that I raised with the minister during our recent fall sitting. As the minister is aware, I formerly had the honour of serving as Nunavut’s worker representative on the Governance Council of the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission, and I am happy to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the good work that is done by the commission here in Iqaluit, other communities, and in the other territory. It’s really nice to see some of the employees here today.

Mr. Speaker, as the member is aware, the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission has been undertaking consultations over the past three years on major and significant changes to the current pension system for workplace injuries and illnesses. During our recent fall sitting, the minister confirmed that she will be introducing legislation in this House during the upcoming 2023-24 fiscal year, to give the facts to these changes.

For the benefit of Nunavut workers and employees who are following our proceedings today can the minister summarize the major changes that she is proposing to make to the current pension system? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission, Mr. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question.

(interpretation ends) I am happy that you asked that question, because I know with the consultation, it was way due to have that review done. I know a number of employers waited on that, to see how the results are.

With the recommendations that were brought forward from those consultations, the intent of the new pension system was to really create the modern and sustainable approach to compensations that reflect the impact and a permanent medical impairment can have on claimants’ long-term ability was one of the major ones, and the current pension system provides non-economic loss on only by providing pension for permanently impaired workers based on solely their percentage of full-body impairment and earnings at the time.

The other one that was mentioned in that recommendation was a proposal pension system will move to WSCC to dual system. So that provides non-economic loss benefit and long-term benefit earnings loss benefit. Last, from that, currently WSCC is currently working only working.... only Workers' Compensations Board in Canada has a pension system that provides pension benefits based solely on percentage of permanently medical impairments.

So those were the major ones that were brought forward from that report. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you. As a former member of the governance council of the WSCC, I have an understanding of the complexities involved in administering the workers' compensation system in two jurisdictions.

Can the minister confirm how many meetings, and I think we see evidence that you may be in the midst of meetings right now, can the minister confirm how many meetings she's had with her counterpart in the Northwest Territories to discuss the upcoming statutory changes, changes which will need to be considered by members of both our Legislative Assembly and the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your question. (interpretation ends) We've had a couple meetings, and it's not just because of this, but for other Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission issues that we need to work on. We've met a couple times in the last year, but we're also planning to meet continually to address some issues that we have, not so much the issues, but more on what we can work together on to continue improving what needs to be done with the WSCC. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your final supplementary, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that the governance council of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission includes members whose mandate is to represent the interest of workers, employers, and the general public.

Can the minister confirm what feedback the WSCC has received to date from the Northern Territories Federation of Labour concerning the proposed legislative changes to the pension system? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) As I had stated earlier, the new pension system underwent on a couple of public engagements, and under those engagements, there were three different feedback requests, and one was online requests, and public engagement also was done, public forum, and the third one was meeting and engaging with stakeholders.

So from that, we did get some feedback from northern territories, federations, not so much in detail, but they participated in the public engagement forum, but also were unsure because of COVID at this time, whether they had responded online because those online surveys are confidential.

So I'm not sure if they did respond on that one, but they were part of it as well.
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Netsilik, Mr. Quqqiaq.

Question 284 – 6(2): Fuel Spill at Taloyoak School

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to direct my questions to the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, there was a fuel spill that occurred on February 7, 2023 at the Netsilik School in Taloyoak.

Mr. Speaker, the parents and the students in the community of Taloyoak are very concerned about the ongoing closure of the school in the community.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister provide a clear explanation of the situation at the school and what is being done about it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: *Quana*, Mr. Speaker. *Quana* to the member for the question. The Department of Education has been working with the Netsilik School in Taloyoak since February 7 due to a fuel spill in the school.

I can tell you that the Department of Education has been working for solutions for the school, the students, and the principal has been working with the staff to find an alternative location for the students to go to school. It is a challenging situation due to infrastructure and we have exhausted a lot of our resources in the community by reaching out to pretty much all the stakeholders in the community, but I can say that learning packages for the students have been distributed, as well as laptops, and these learning packages for the students are there for the students to learn at home.

On February 22 there were food packages that were delivered to the students of the school, and I thank those who worked tirelessly to support the students and their needs and bring food to their homes. *Quana*, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also, the schools were recently closed so that our teachers could conduct their professional development training. This kind of training is certainly important for our teachers. However, it simply adds to the number of days that our students are not attending school.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister describe how her department monitors the number of days of school that students miss in the communities and how she works with her department officials to ensure that children receive the number of days of schooling required by education legislation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: *Quana*, Mr. Speaker. We work with the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities as well as the local district education authorities to develop a school calendar and every year the school calendars set the outlines and parameters for the school days that are operational. We know in the springtime when the school days for the potential years and we do outline the professional development days.

As the member stated, we did have a great week here in Iqaluit, where a number of teachers came from across the territory, including Taloyoak, for a professional development week. I'm thankful for our partner, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, who hosted over 300 teachers in our territory that came across our territory to work together on education. The school was closed for that week.

We do work to ensure that our students aren't missing as much school if there are instances like what we're going through currently in Taloyoak. We keep a close eye and monitor the attendance rates for every school and we do keep track of that information and that information goes through the Kitikmeot School Operations and then is handed down to the Department of Education, but we do work to ensure that if there are any missing days, we will be able to have alternatives like what I mentioned with the learning packages for students to learn at home. *Quana*, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Students in the community of Taloyoak are anxious to get back in the classroom. They have already missed so much class time due to the past two years of the pandemic. Mr. Speaker, parents are also concerned that the future success of their children is going to be further compromised by the ongoing lack of schooling.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to reopening the school in Taloyoak as soon as possible and can the department make it as soon as possible? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: *Quana*, Mr. Speaker. *Quana* to the member for that great question. I would like to first of all thank the Department of Education, the staff that are working very hard on this to reopen the school, as well as Community and Government Services, who are there as our maintainers of our buildings.

This operation doesn't come very easily. There are many hands, contractors, people that have to come and work to remediate a fuel spill, and this work will open when the school is safe to do so. There are several different tests that have to happen, including monitoring the air quality and ensuring that the school is safe for people to be in there, including our staff and our students.

When the school is safe, we are very excited to welcome the students back into the school. I don't have a date yet of when the school will be open, but I hopefully will be as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Kugluktuk, Mr. Anavilok.

Question 285 – 6(2): Kugluktuk Power Plant

Mr. Anavilok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, and they concern the issue of Kugluktuk's new power plant. This is an issue that I have raised on a number of occasions.

As the minister is aware, Kugluktuk's existing power plant is over 50 years old and in need of replacement.

The Qulliq Energy Corporation has been working towards the design and construction of a new hybrid diesel-solar power plant. Federal funding for this project under the Arctic Energy Fund was announced in August 2019.

The Qulliq Energy Corporation issued a new request for tenders in July 2022. Information published by the government indicates that the tender was cancelled in December 2022 "due to budgetary constraints."

Can the minister clarify the extent to which the lowest bid received exceeded the available budget for this project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Mr. Simailak.

Hon. Craig Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question. Yes, this has been an ongoing issue with the Kugluktuk Power Plant replacement project. It started in 2019. A revised design and new scope of work will be posted for tender by April of this year. The funding was not enough. Solar panels and battery storage components and part of the original design had to be removed due to the lack of available funding to include the specialized technology. It comes down to a lack of funding in dollar amounts that I will not be mentioning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Anavilok.

Mr. Anavilok (interpretation): I thank the minister for his response. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Qulliq Energy Corporation's current corporate plan indicates that construction of Kugluktuk's new power plant was supposed to have started during the 2021-22 fiscal year. When will the Qulliq Energy Corporation issue a new tender for this essential project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Mr. Simailak.

Hon. Craig Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question. Yes, the plan right now is to post the tender in April of this year, 2023, with a revised design and new scope of work. The plan is for April of this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Anavilok.

Mr. Anavilok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister is aware, Kugluktuk's new power plant is a hybrid design that will be powered by both solar energy and diesel fuel. Can the minister clarify the extent to which the design of the new power plant has caused so many tendering processes to be unsuccessful? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Mr. Simailak.

Hon. Craig Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Apologies; there's a bit of a dialectal difficulty, so I missed part of that and the interpreters as well missed part of that. If the member can please re-ask his question and hopefully we can get it right this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Member for Kugluktuk, Mr. Anavilok.

Mr. Anavilok (interpretation): I'll ask it again in English. (interpretation ends) As the minister is aware, Kugluktuk's new power plant is a hybrid design that will be powered by both solar energy and diesel fuel. Can the minister clarify the extent to which the design of the new power plant has caused so many tendering processes to be unsuccessful? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Mr. Simailak.

Hon. Craig Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for re-asking his question and clarifying. Yes, at the end of the day it was the dollar amounts that caused all this grief. The Kugluktuk Power Plant and the Arctic Bay Power Plant began tendering processes in 2019. The Arctic Bay Power Plant, which is running only on diesel fuel, has been operational for two years now. It was complications with the alternative energy and dollar amounts were coming in a lot higher when we were trying to do the hybrid power plant. At the end of the day it was the dollar figures just made it too expensive to try to get it going at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Mr. Sammurtok.

Question 286 – 6(2): Chesterfield Inlet Power Plant

Mr. Sammurtok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) My questions are for the Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation.

As the minister is aware, Chesterfield Inlet's current power plant is almost 50 years old and in need of replacement.

In June 2022 the Utility Rates Review Council submitted its report to the minister concerning the Qulliq Energy Corporation's proposal to construct a new power plant. The Utility Rates Review Council recommended that the project be approved.

Can the minister provide an update today on the Qulliq Energy Corporation's timeline for the design and construction of Chesterfield Inlet's new power plant? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Mr. Simailak.

Hon. Craig Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question regarding the Qulliq Energy Corporation's project to replace the power plant in Chesterfield Inlet.

It does remain on our 10-year capital list. At this time, there are other power plants that are older than Chesterfield Inlet, I believe. So, they take a bit more priority, but it is on our 10-year capital plant. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Sammurtok.

Mr. Sammurtok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Utility Rates Review Council report indicated that the Chesterfield Inlet power plant project "Has been identified to receive funding from the Arctic Energy Fund program for the contribution of 75 percent of eligible expenses."

Can the minister confirm when the Qulliq Energy Corporation will submit a request for funding under this federal program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Mr. Simailak.

Hon. Craig Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question regarding the funding for the power plant project. We are hoping to use the Arctic Energy Fund to help fund this project. It will depend on the power plants that will be built before Chesterfield Inlet.

Going forward, right now, I can't say it will be under the Arctic Energy Fund, or not. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your final supplementary, Mr. Sammurtok.

Mr. Sammurtok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) As the minister is aware, the Qulliq Energy Corporation has been working towards the design and construction of a new hybrid diesel-solar panel plan in Kugluktuk.

Can the minister indicate if Chesterfield Inlet's new power plant will also a hybrid design? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Mr. Simailak.

Hon. Craig Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question on whether or not this will be a hybrid power plant, or not.

At this time, we do not have that answer. There will be consultations done with the Hamlet of Chesterfield Inlet. The lessons learned, going forward, whether or not any power plant will have hybrid, or not, at this time. It will still be a consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Uqqummiut, Ms. Killiktee.

Question 287 – 6(2): Benefits for Municipal Employees

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): I forget what I was going to say now...

>>Laughter

...if I rose to ask a question earlier. Sometimes I take a very long time in my preamble. You all took a very long time, for asking the questions and answers. I forget what I was going to say.

I say “good morning” to my constituents, and to the people of Iqaluit, and everybody listening. I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Community and Government Services. I may have to be cut off.

My question has to do with my constituents. My question is as the former mayor of the Hamlet of Qikiqtarjuaq, I speak from experience when I say that it’s something that I’m very concerned about. Community and Government Services provides direct funding to the hamlets.

I will talk about my experience first because I considered this very important that our hamlets have proper workers, and have very able people work in them all the time.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, as you know, employees of the territorial government have medical insurance coverage, includes certain benefits in respect to medical travel. For example, the ability to stay at the commercial accommodation while en route medical travel frees up space at the boarding home.

(interpretation) Mr. Speaker, concerns have been raised with me that the current benefits provided to municipal employees are inadequate. I have seen this in Qikiqtarjuaq, the benefits are inadequate.

Can the minister clarify the extent to which the Department of Community and Government Services determines the benefits that are provided to senior managers and frontline employees of municipal corporations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Community and Government Services, Mr. Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good day to my colleague. I thank her for expressing her concern in the question.

Hamlets receive funding annually from Community and Government Services, it’s called the Municipal Funding Program, and they follow a formula when they receive funding for operations, including salaries for their employees and other things.

For benefits, the question was about benefits, I will have to look into that before I can respond to that. I will see if the benefits come in the same bulk as us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister will recall, the Nunavut Association of Municipalities recently met here in Iqaluit last year. I pay tribute to the important work of the organization.

Can the minister confirm if the issue of remuneration and benefits for municipal employees was raised at the meeting with him and his officials? I know they invited you

to the meeting, did they ask you about it, the fact that they are concerned about it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Community and Government Services, Mr. Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Nunavut mayors' meeting had an annual general meeting, and there was not much discussion about benefits to employees, however, the Nunavut Association of Municipalities gave a motion, a resolution. I can talk about that.

We have been producing a response to them as well, and there were other things that were talked about at the meeting, and my fellow ministers were able to attend, representing their departments, and there were questions directed to them as well, however the question that the member for Uqqummiut is asking, if there were questions about benefits and remuneration, that was not discussed as far as I am aware. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your final supplementary, Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, a discussion needs to be done about that matter, and the hamlets get a lot of help from your department, and the hamlets are only able to operate because you provide them with specific funding. However, there has been rapid growth in this area and in order to keep up with the accelerated rate of growth, the hamlets all have a lot of catching up to do. Accordingly, the needs of the more senior members, the SAOs of the hamlets, foreman's and finance people, all need to be better addressed and met. That is why I am voicing this issue. They have been given even more responsibilities.

I will speak in English. (interpretation ends) Looking at CGS and community development grants and contributions policies under the Municipal Funding Program, I see huge play with municipalities, senior administrators, and maintenance seniors having big responsibilities that the government has created. The funding is used, and that includes: general government services, general works, protective services, transportation, building maintenance, utilities, recreation, land administrations, and so on. They have so much in play in their offices.

(interpretation) Because of that, I would like to ask the minister: knowing that this funding will end in April 2025, can the minister commit to reviewing this matter to ensure that the staff of the hamlets are properly taken care of? As I mentioned earlier, it is crucial that we have happy, proficient, committed staff. I recognize that the funding provided is significant, but they are constantly facing large deficits. Having the largest number of employees, they spend a lot of money through this department with public works in the communities.

Moving forward, improvements need to be made with budgeting and funding allocation when it comes to determining how much money the individual communities get, as well

as looking at all the operations and services that need to be performed by the communities. These include: travel, accommodations, medical travel accommodations, etcetera. I would like that these items be considered when allocating funding in the future, I will stop here for now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Community and Government Services, Mr. Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hamlets' employee benefits are reviewed on an ongoing basis. We review their benefits on an annual basis, and sometimes even on a daily basis, to see where there could be more support offered to the hamlet's employees. During the next annual review, we can take into consideration the examples provided by my colleague and determine if there is a way to make future improvements and continue to support the hamlet staff as much as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Members, be aware that the time allotted for question period is now over. Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to extend question period. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The member is seeking unanimous consent to extend question period. Are there any nays? There is a nay. Item 7. Written Questions. Item 8. Returns to Written Questions. Item 9. Replies to Opening Address. Item 10. Replies to Budget Address. Item 11. Petitions. Member for Aivilik, Mr. Malliki.

Item 11: Petitions

Petition 002 – 6(2): New Community Hall for Naujaat

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I have the honour today of presenting the petition that has been signed by approximately 100 of my constituents in Naujaat.

Mr. Speaker, the petition calls on the Government of Nunavut to construct a new community hall in Naujaat after a fire destroyed the old facility in October 2022.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition today on behalf of my constituents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Item 11. Petitions. Item 12. Responses to Petitions. Item 13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. Item 14. Tabling of Documents. I have one.

Item 14: Tabling of Documents

Tabled Document 095 – 6(2): 2023-26 Business Plan of the Office of the Legislative Assembly

Tabled Document 096 – 6(2): 2023-26 Business Plan of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

Tabled Document 097 – 6(2): 2023-26 Business Plan of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

Tabled Document 098 – 6(2): 2023-26 Business Plan of the Office of the Languages Commissioner

Tabled Document 099 – 6(2): 2023-26 Business Plan of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth

I am tabling the 2023-26 business plans for the Office of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, the Representative for Children and Youth, the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Nunavut, and the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. Thank you.

Item 15. Notices of Motions. Item 16. Notices of Motions for the First Reading of Bills. Item 17. Motions. I recognize the Member for Aivilik, Mr. Malliki.

Item 17: Motions

Motion 014 – 6(2): Extended Sitting Hours and Days

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for South Baffin, that the Speaker be authorized to set such sitting hours and days as the Speaker deems fit to assist with business before the House during the present sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The motion is in order. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried.

Item 18. First Reading of Bills. Item 19. Second Reading of Bills. I recognize the Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Item 19: Second Reading of Bills**Bill 19 – An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act – Second Reading**

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Good morning, Nunavummiut. (interpretation ends) *Uqaqtittijii*, I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Quttiktuq, that Bill 19, *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act*, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill creates the Nunavut Carbon Credit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The motion is in order. To the principle of the Bill. Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried and Bill 19 is referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation.

Second Reading of Bills. I recognize the Minister of Human Resources, Ms. Nakashuk.

Bill 20 – An Act to Amend the Public Service Act – Second Reading

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Quttiktuq, that Bill 20, *An Act to Amend Public Service Act*, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the *Public Service Act* to resolve a discrepancy between the English and French versions by clearly setting the minister's power to designate only a part of the day as a holiday in the French version. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Speaker: Question has been called. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried and Bill 20 is referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation.

Item 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Bills 16, 17, 18, and 21 with Mr. Savikataaq in the Chair.

Before we proceed with the Committee of the Whole, we will take a 20-minute break.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House recessed at 10:50 and Committee resumed at 11:17*

Item 20: Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

Chairman (Mr. Savikataaq): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to our Committee of the Whole meetings here. This morning here, I would like to call the committee meeting

to order. In Committee of the Whole we have the following items to deal with: Bills 16, 17, 18, and 21. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) We wish to start the review of the main estimates and business plan for the Department of Health. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Are we in agreement that we first deal with Bill 18?

Some Members: Agreed.

Bill 18 – Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, 2023-2024 – Health – Consideration in Committee

Chairman: It has been a while. I would now like to ask Minister Main: do you have any officials that you would like to appear before the committee? Minister Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I do. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Does the committee agree to let the officials appear before you?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Sergeant-at-Arms.

For the record, Minister Main, please introduce your officials and then proceed with your opening comments. Minister Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members. This morning I will be presenting the Department of Health's main estimates for 2023-24. Joining me this morning is our Director of Corporate Services, Greg Babstock, (interpretation ends) Executive Director, (interpretation) and our new Deputy Minister of Health, Ms. Megan Hunt.

(interpretation ends) Ms. Hunt is coming to the Nunavut government from the First Nations Health Authority, the health and wellness partner to over 200 diverse First Nations communities across British Columbia and the first and only provincial First Nations health authority in Canada. She was most recently the organization's executive director of primary health care and e-health, leading the ongoing development and implementation of the First Nations Health Authority primary care model of health services and building their model of interprofessional, team-based care to strengthen the delivery of quality indigenous health services.

We welcome Megan to our health and Government of Nunavut leadership team and look forward to her continuing the ongoing good work of the department.

>>*Applause*

For the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Department of Health proposes a Vote 1 budget of \$469.57 million. This is an increase of \$23.46 million from the year prior and is inclusive of an \$11.56 million appropriation to cover the increased compensation and benefits expenses brought about by the ratification of the new collective agreement between the Government of Nunavut and the Nunavut Employees Union.

With the sunsetting of the COVID-19 Pandemic Secretariat as of March 31, 2023 and the subsequent end to 21 term positions, Health will realize a net increase of two positions in 2023-24. The 23 new positions being proposed continue the departmental focus upon capacity development and Inuit employment within communities across the territory, an initiative that was started in the prior fiscal year. All but four of the identified positions in the upcoming fiscal year are located outside of Iqaluit.

Health officials continue to work with Health Canada and Indigenous Services Canada on developing the new contribution agreement in support of the departmental delivery of Non-Insured Health Benefits programming to eligible Nunavummiut. It is anticipated that Canada will be presenting their draft contribution agreement in the near future for consideration by Health. Health is expecting the new contribution agreement for 2023-24 to provide for full reimbursement of Non-Insured Health Benefits eligible medical air transportation expenses and a 10 percent administration fee.

Indigenous Services Canada has, since fiscal year 2020-21, provided Health with a negotiated \$78 million annually as a bridge to this new agreement. Commencing last fiscal year, Health has leveraged this additional Non-Insured Health Benefits revenue to facilitate strategic reinvestments in the territorial health care system. In fiscal year 2023-24 an additional \$11.9 million of this resource is being proposed to support the continued growth of health care human resource capacity and service development territory-wide, the opening of the new long-term care facility in Rankin Inlet, various administrative and operational requirements, and virtual care delivery to supplement existing in-territory service delivery.

Every year, community health centres experience increased demand for services as the population of Nunavut grows. It is necessary to strengthen staff and operational capacity in health centres across the territory to help optimize these expanding health care delivery obligations. Primary to Health's reinvestment of our new federal funding in 2023-24 is to help address some of the emergent staffing shortfalls within vital community health centre administrative and support functions.

Health is proposing \$8.6 million to finance multiple initiatives to best support the ever-increasing client needs being placed upon health care staff. These opportunities include an ask of \$2.18 million for implementation of new virtual care provision supports;

\$350,000 to provide enhancements to point-of-care lab testing and technology management and planning; an additional \$230,000 to assist in the expansion of the Nursing Resource Program with the creation of two additional nursing-focused positions; \$881,000 to promote the strengthening of midwifery programming within the territory; and a renewal of the budget in the amount of \$4 million required to support the continued use of paramedics within health centres.

The department continues to work hard to recruit and retain nurses to meet the health needs of our communities. The *Roadmap to Strengthening the Nunavut Nursing Workforce* is a five-year commitment and, as we conclude year one, I am pleased to report that a number of projects identified for action in the first year have been completed, while others are currently underway. Health will soon be publishing a year one progress report and is now identifying new initiatives for year two. In particular we have taken steps to improve our recruitment efforts, including preliminary work on a multimedia health worker recruitment roadmap, social media and Government of Nunavut website monitoring to identify nurse candidates pursuing employment, and seeking additional federal implementation resources.

Further, Health has received approval from the Financial Management Board for phase 1 of the critical health staffing measures package to negotiate targeted recruitment and retention terms with the Nunavut Employees Union and the Government of Nunavut Department of Human Resources. For indeterminate nurse positions, health human resources has now increased its capacity to assist with new hires, while casual nurse interviewing is continuous. We have been successful in recruiting several new public health nurses, licensed practical nurses, and community health nurses as a result. To support their retention, Health has created newly revised orientation and mentorship programs for community health, public health, nurse practitioners, and mental health nurses.

Recruiting nurses is an important task, but retaining them is equally, if not more, important. Nurse recruitment for community health nurses especially is a priority for the department, as they are key to preventing health service disruptions, but it continues to be a difficult challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic created a significantly increased demand for nurses across the country and around the globe. It has also led to a large exodus of nurses from the workforce due to work-related fatigue and burnout. This global nursing shortage is estimated to be approximately 15 million positions, of which 35,000 of these are Canadian.

For our department, recruiting nurses to Nunavut's fly-in only communities poses an additional challenge. The nursing shortage is being felt right across the country and is driving demand and competition for these key health professionals. There is an increasing reliance on recruitment and retention incentives being offered to nurses across all jurisdictions, including signing and retention bonuses, additional vacation leave, free travel, child care support, and housing. The competition is fierce, but I assure you that the department is being creative and is working hard to recruit and retain nurses needed to deliver continuous quality health care for Nunavummiut.

Fundamental to health capacity development and Inuit employment in 2023-24 is the creation of 11 new basic radiological/laboratory technician positions to further enhance diagnostic capabilities for clients. This initiative will be supported by focused training programs and will assist us in continuing to deliver care closer to home. This Inuit employment focused capacity initiative will require \$963,000 in fiscal 2023-24, which includes salary as well as operational expenses for training program delivery.

Long-term care for Nunavut elders remains a central priority for this government and for the Department of Health. Our department has been investigating a number of innovative and creative procurement opportunities to enable non-governmental entities to assume the responsibility for both the future construction of long-term care facilities as well as provision of ongoing care services within those facilities. While this work continues and to ensure that Health is prepared to support repatriated elders in any eventuality, we are requesting \$1.23 million, including eight positions, in fiscal 2023-24 to ensure that the first Nunavut elders can take residence in the Rankin Inlet Long-term Care Facility in the winter of 2024, irrespective of any possible emergent partnership opportunities.

With respect to the central management and administration of the department, Health is proposing an additional \$1.1 million to further enhance headquarters capacity development and other functional requirements. Health is requesting approval of \$87,000 to create an Inuktitut communications support officer as well as \$73,000 towards a policy clerk position to support Inuit employment and further the use of Inuktitut across the many multiple communications and outreach requirements of the department.

The ongoing implementation of the Health Information Unit remains a high departmental priority, requiring an additional \$350,000 in 2023-24.

Further, \$560,000 is required for continuing work and activities required in the implementation of the *Mental Health Act* which was approved in the prior fiscal year.

The department has been and continues to manage budgetary allocations in some program areas that are insufficient because of increasing and uncontrollable health care delivery and operational costs. In 2023-24 Health is requesting an additional \$2.14 million in support of escalating purchased service expenses, \$3 million to offset incremental enhanced security requirements at community health centres, as well as an additional \$527,000 to further supplement Iqaluit Health Services transient housing.

Iksivautaaq, I want to highlight a change in the business plan since it was shared with the committee. The *Nursing Act* work had been deferred to 2024-25. The schedule has changed recently and will continue as originally planned in 2023-24. I will be sending a letter to the Standing Committee on Legislation shortly to provide additional details; however, should this committee have any questions today, I am happy to address them.

In conclusion, *Iksivautaaq*, 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 support 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 yet continuing global COVID-19 pandemic and now the unique clinical and economic challenges it has created globally.

Health strives to be innovative, creative, and pioneering in support of our mandate to provide the best possible care to Nunavut residents. Our aim is to continue to build a well-governed, integrated, collaborative health care system that is nimble and responsive to the needs of all Nunavummiut. The department envisions a health care system that embraces Inuit societal values and empowers all Nunavummiut to live healthy lives.

(interpretation) That concludes my opening comments and I am now available and happy to respond to questions from committee members. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Does the chair of the standing committee have any comments? Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, minister and your officials, and welcome to our newest deputy minister.

Mr. Chairman, the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Wellness have reviewed the 2023-24 Main Estimates and Business Plan of the Department of Health.

Members note that the department's proposed 2023-24 operations and maintenance budget continues to reflect the federal government's enhanced contribution for Non-Insured Health Benefits which was increased in 2020-21 to address significant shortfalls specifically in the area of coverage for medical travel. Our government has historically shouldered these costs since Nunavut was created and members hope that these promising steps forward will continue.

The standing committee fully supports the minister and his officials in their negotiations for a new long-term agreement with the federal government which will ensure full and adequate coverage of such Non-Insured Health Benefits as medical travel costs as well as related expenses. Members have consistently raised concerns with respect to such services as travel, accommodation, and escorts provided for Nunavut Inuit who need to leave their homes to receive medical care.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to negotiations with respect to the Non-Insured Health Benefits program, the standing committee fully supports the Government of Nunavut in its discussions with the federal government to access adequate funding to meet our health care needs. Our territory faces significant challenges in the areas of infrastructure, staffing and resources which are unique to the north.

With the exception of the Nunavut Recovery Centre which is scheduled to open in 2025, the federal government has not contributed to addressing such infrastructure needs as replacing or expanding our community health centres. Delivering health services out of

cramped, crowded and aging facilities puts additional stress on our hard-working frontline health care staff.

Mr. Chairman, the standing committee has noted that the Department of Health is proposing to add a number of staffing positions in 2023-24 as well as increasing budgets in various program and service areas. Despite the department's ongoing vacancy rate of close to 50 percent, committee members acknowledge the need to strengthen staff and operational capacities. Members were encouraged to learn of the creative approaches being considered and implemented by the department to recruit and retain nursing staff, recognizing that the shortage of nurses and other health professionals is not only a national but an international concern. Members look forward to the introduction of the department's new nursing legislation in the upcoming fiscal year.

The committee has noted that the department continues to contract paramedic services to address staffing shortages at our community health centres and looks forward to any updates on this initiative. Members encourage the minister to work with his counterparts to promote the training and involvement of more Inuit in providing such services at the community level. The standing committee further supports initiatives that will see more health care delivery being provided at the community and regional level, including such services as midwifery and birthing and dental surgery for children, so that Nunavut residents do not have to leave their homes and families for extended periods of time.

Mr. Chairman, the issue of long-term care and other services for Nunavut elders has been an ongoing concern for Members of the Legislative Assembly. Members note that the long-term care facility currently under construction in Rankin Inlet will need to fill a number of positions once it opens. The committee looks forward to future updates on how the long-term care facility will be operated and its anticipated operational costs. Members strongly encourage the minister to continue working with such entities as Nunavut Arctic College to increase the number of Inuit who can be trained to provide support in such facilities as well as in community-based home care programs.

Mr. Chairman, mental health care and services are in great demand across our territory. While members have been given to understand that a number of new frontline mental health staff have already been employed in all three regions, it has been noted that the *Mental Health Act* is not yet fully in force with a number of regulations yet to be finalized. Enhanced collaboration with such other government departments as Education and Justice are strongly encouraged as well as programs to train more Inuit to work in this field. Committee members support the minister in his efforts to ensure that all frontline workers have additional, specialized support and resources to address issues related to sexual assault and trauma, especially for children.

The Department of Health provides significant levels of funding for suicide prevention initiatives and organizations. The standing committee strongly encourages the minister to review the objectives and outcomes of the various initiatives funded through his department's grants and contributions process to ensure that these funds are well spent

and proving effective. Members strongly support community-led initiatives which can have a meaningful impact on the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

Mr. Chairman, the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred change in the methods of service delivery in a number of areas. In particular the Department of Health continues to expand and enhance its virtual health care service delivery. Members look forward to detailed updates on the department's progress in this area.

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 (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I would like to report progress.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) We have a motion on the floor to report progress and the motion is non-debatable. All in favour of the motion. All against. You lose. The motion is carried. I will now rise to report progress.

Sorry. Before I do that, Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out.

Speaker: Item 21. Report of the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Savikataaq.

Item 21: Report of the Committee of the Whole

Mr. Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Your committee has been considering Bill 18 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: There is a motion on the floor. Is there a seconder? Mr. Qavvik. The motion is in order. To the motion.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried.

Item 22. Third Reading of Bills. Item 23. *Orders of the Day*. Mr. Ball.

Item 23: Orders of the Day

Mr. Ball: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to remind members that the Regular Members' Caucus will be meeting in the Nanuq Room at 1:30 p.m. this afternoon. Following that, the Standing Committee on Legislation will be meeting in the Nanuq Room at 3 p.m.

Orders of the Day for February 27, 2023:

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
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 16
 - Bill 17
 - Bill 18
 - Bill 21
21. Report of the Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Speaker: This House stands adjourned until Monday, February 27, at 1:30 p.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House adjourned at 11:47*

