Standing Committee on Oversight of
Government Operations and Public
Accounts Hearings on the 2023 Report of
the Auditor General of Canada to the
Legislative Assembly of Nunavut on Child
and Family Services
Iqaluit, Nunavut
September 20, 2023

#### **Members Present:**

Janet Pitsiulaaq Brewster George Hickes, Chair Joelie Kaernerk Mary Killiktee Adam Lightstone Solomon Malliki Karen Nutarak Daniel Qavvik Joseph Inagayuk Quqqiaq Alexander Sammurtok, Co-Chair Joe Savikataaq Craig Simailak

#### **Staff Members:**

Stephen Innuksuk Siobhan Moss

## **Interpreters**:

Eva Ayalik Andrew Dialla Attima Hadlari Millie Hikok Jacopoosie Peter Abraham Tagalik Blandina Tulugarjuk

#### Witnesses:

Jeff Chown, Deputy Minister of Finance
Liliane Cotnoir, Director
James Elliott, Environmental Liabilities
Project Manager
Jonathan Ellsworth, Deputy Minister of
Family Services
Michele LeBlanc-Havard, Director
Environmental Protection

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Andrew Hayes, Deputy Auditor General
Megan Hunt, Deputy Minister of Health
Caroline Jean, Director
Mélanie Joanisse, Director
Sandy Kownak, Associate Deputy Minister
Victoria Madsen, Assistant Deputy Minister
of Health
Jim McKenzie, Principal
Sophie Miller, Assistant Auditor General
Susan Nichols, Comptroller General
Dr. Pawa, Acting Chief Public Health Officer
Michael Robichaud, Principal
Casey Thomas, Assistant Auditor General
Dan Young, Assistant Deputy Minister Fiscal
Management

>>Committee commenced at 8:58

Chairman (Mr. Hickes): ...the Auditor General of Canada's Report on Child and Family Services. Mr. Savikataaq, would you be able to lead us in prayer this morning.

>>Prayer

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Savikataaq. We left yesterday off on paragraphs 21 through 25 from the Office of the Auditor General's report and the next name I had on my list is Ms. Nutarak. Please proceed.

**Ms. Nutarak** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) My question was in the foster care, so when we get into the foster care in the next section. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you for that. Right now, we're still on paragraphs 21 through 25. Do any Committee Members have any questions on those paragraphs? If not, we will proceed. Thank you. We will go to paragraphs 26 through 31, foster care. Ms. Nutarak.

**Ms. Nutarak** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) My first

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question for the Auditor General is: paragraph 23 describes a case where two plans of care for the same child were not followed up over an extended period. It also notes that the system "failed to help a parent acquire the skills to change a pattern of harm." How did the audit evaluate what kinds of services were offered and accepted by parents through the plan of care process? Thank you, *Iksivautaaq*.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our examination focused on the client's file and that, as we note in the report, is where we saw the first plan of care had been drafted, and that there was a period of time where there was nothing else on the file until the second plan of care had been produced.

We looked to see what follow up actions, and there was no evidence to indicate that there had been any on the first, which is why we point out in the report that they had set up a new plan of care. Again, there was nothing indicating that there had been any follow-up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak: I thank the (interpretation ends) Auditor General (interpretation) for his response. (interpretation) I wish to ask the government: (interpretation ends) Paragraph 24 of the audit report notes that such programs and services as alcohol and drug counselling and parenting programs were not offered at all in some communities or only for short periods of time. What is being done to address this need? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Good morning, everybody. Family wellness is actively re-establishing partnerships with community-level organizations to ensure that the delivery of programs are made available to the clients we serve, respecting this particular matter of services being accessible for alcohol and drug counselling and parenting programs.

In addition, in this fiscal year we have approved several *Inunnguiniq* projects that will be funded through the Poverty Reduction Division. These programs are integral to our broader initiatives to promote the revitalization of cultural skills and enhanced family wellbeing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Nutarak.

**Ms. Nutarak** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.... Who is it? To whom? Thank you. Which (interpretation ends) organizations (interpretation) in the communities do you work with on this file? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are several. I will just briefly list the ones I have available in my materials this morning. There is a parent and child cooking nutrition program that we deliver in Iqaluit. It is aimed at fostering family engagement. There's a young man empowerment program in Cambridge Bay, which encompasses outreach, life coaching, therapy, and support for employment and education through discussion and mentorship.

In addition, the Nearest and Dearest program in Kugluktuk is designed to facilitate quality and enjoyable time between parents and their children. It supports increased physical activities and offers a safe and supportive **Δρ<sup>-</sup>'\* 94** (Ͻͺʹϯρησ): 'dϧ-°α, Δϧ-ʹͼϧ. Δϧ-ʹͼϧ. Δϧ-ʹͼϧ. Δϧ-ʹͼϧ. Δϧ-ʹͼϧ. Δϧ-<sup>2</sup> (Ͻͼφα Λλ-<sup>2</sup> (Ͻͼφα Λλ-<sup>2</sup> (Δε<sup>2</sup> (

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environment through excursions harvesting soapstone and others.

The single mothers' support group in Arviat, with the objective of providing support and creating a comfortable, confidential environment where single mothers can connect, engage in various activities, and attend workshops together. This is just a snapshot of some of the initiatives and our commitment to promoting family well-being.

Mr. Chairman, I can commit to the committee to providing the full list of programs that are delivered through some of the not-for-profits that we work with in the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that commitment. Ms. Nutarak.

**Ms. Nutarak** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth and I also thank you, Mr. Chairman. Here in Nunavut, there are many services provided that they could access, and further, specifically, mental health support programs. As an example, if you look at Ilisagsivik in Clyde River, Ilisagsivik has (interpretation ends) a 28-day program onthe-land (interpretation) was just introduced. Is the government working to support these Inuit bodies that provide support to fellow Inuit, as by all appearances our government disdains working with them due to the lack of formal recognition or the lack of a (interpretation ends) certificate (interpretation) or other academic acceptance.

Even though programs such as this are immediately available, in my opinion, I feel these services should be taken advantage of, and this is just a comment. This is just a comment outlining these gaps, and I know from personal experience, as I was an adult educator for 12 years. Let me switch to

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English here.

(interpretation ends) When you support, mentor, and guide our people, they go a long ways and succeed. I've seen it with my own eyes. (interpretation) When Inuit have the proper support, they can accomplish multiple tasks. The programs that are available within Nunavut have to be used by the government to provide the services. Our young students have to be able to return home to take courses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure I heard a question in that statement, but I agree with the Member's statement. Just to speak to the need to enhance those programs, I readily agree. In addition, I think as part of our communications strategy, we need to build the public awareness about how these programs can be accessed, and we'll do just that as we work towards implementing our strategic plan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. The next name I have on my list for paragraphs 26 through 31: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, everybody. Welcome back. Some nice ties happening today. I hope everybody had a really good rest and took some time for some self-care yesterday. I heard somebody early this morning say that they felt really safe in this space. For that, I want to commend the Chair for ensuring the safety of the people here and who are listening because these are heavy issues that we're discussing, and so I hope everybody is taking care of themselves in the coming days.

For the Auditor General's... on paragraph number 29, it says there was no evidence that

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the department took action when it received information that 10 children in foster care were experiencing suicidal thoughts, or had attempted suicide, or were at risk of sexual abuse and harm. I just want to hear whether or not the audit identified whether check-ins were taking place, or whether they were not taking place, and whether or not there was an understanding of why those check-ins may not have been taking place? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Hayes.

**Mr. Hayes**: Thank you. I will start, and then I might ask Mr. McKenzie to see if he would like to add to this.

We did review a sample of files and we used the word 'alarming' to describe the fact that the department did not have evidence of contact for extended periods with children or foster homes. A couple of the bullets that we have in paragraph 28 show some of those examples.

What we say at the beginning of paragraph 29, and I think this is an important statement to emphasize, is that in the absence of checkins, the department didn't know about the children's well-being or safety. The example that we use about the suicidal thoughts, or, even worse, that they've attempted suicide, highlights the importance of these check-ins and making sure that these children are being looked after, that they're safe, and that there is support for them.

We don't have information about the reasons why the check-ins weren't happening. As we have talked about in earlier stages of the report, the evidence simply wasn't there, and that is concerning for us. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

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**Ms. Brewster**: Mr. Chairman, I believe Mr. Hayes has something to add.

**Chairman**: Thank you. My apologies. Mr. McKenzie, please.

Mr. McKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Hon. Member, for your question. I think our observations in this section point to a number of the overarching issues that we've noted in the report; the importance of training, the challenges that the department faces in terms of its workforce, and continuity of its workforce.

I think it also underlines the importance of having, and I know we've mentioned it throughout the report and we kind of summarize it at the end, good tools for community social service workers to have in terms of managing client information, being able to document the actions that they've taken, documenting them and having them accessible, which again, underlines comments that were made yesterday about supporting the continuity and the quality of care that clients of the department are receiving.

I would just like to underline also, the emphasis that we've placed on this in the report and in others, whether it's out-of-territory care, or foster care, for example, is the important of doing check-ins; certainly, for the individual, the person, the child or the youth, who is in foster care to know if everything is okay, are there any additional supports that they can use, or make use of, or that they need. Also, to look from the foster parent perspective. Are they getting the supports that they need in order to provide the supports to the child that they're caring for?

It's really a summary or encapsulates a lot of

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the observations that we have in the report and some of root causes that we've noted. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just ask the government witnesses what process is in place to ensure that the Department of Family Services staff are checking in on children in foster care homes? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and tank you for the question. In essence, this goes to the point I made yesterday around ensuring that client liaison officers are receiving adequate training to ensure their awareness and compliance with standards of check-in. The department has taken steps to ensure that the client liaison officers are trained and there is an oversight process to ensure that foster children are being checked on in accordance with the standards. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to hear more about what the process is for recording those check-ins are and whether not there is full compliance on that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. I believe Mr. Ellsworth was responding more to out-of-territory care. I believe Ms. Brewster is talking more about in-territory care, the check-in process, if I'm correct. Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to that point. To me, whether a child is in care in-

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territory or out-of-territory, they are our full responsibility. I would appreciate a response about both sets of clients. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for clarifying that. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I understand the question: what do we do to ensure that regular contact is being made? As I mentioned yesterday, regular contact is important in the sense of ensuring the safety or ongoing safety of the children who are placed in foster homes. The standard is such that we are required to check in regularly, and when I say regularly, I mentioned yesterday that it has to be every month or two months. There are various patterns of check-ins that are designed to ensure the safety of the children who are in foster care. So if it is in-territory, often times it is the community-level social worker who is going into the homes and doing the home visits. There is a whole screening process that occurs before the foster home is approved under the Act.

Regular visits, as I mentioned earlier, and then there is an oversight, I'm sorry for being jumbly this morning, Mr. Chairman. It requires checks and balances, right? So social workers are required to comply with the standards of checking in with children in care. Supervisors are required to oversee and ensure that happens. Regular training, as I mentioned yesterday, is occurring through the lens of ensuring that compliance is achieved to the standards that social workers work by and I am happy to share those standards for the reference of this Committee's work going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

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Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you Mr. Ellsworth. I appreciate having a little bit more information on that, however my question was: what are the standards for record keeping of those checkins, and are employees complying with those standards? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for the clarification. I apologize for my misapprehension of the question. Case management notes; every interaction on any file requires notes to ensure the continuity of our record achieves the standard we are bound by. Every time there's an interaction, there is case note. That case note, as I understand it, finds itself into many different areas because of the lack of a central records management function. Right now, the case still goes on the actual file, it goes into the current tech solution which is called CIS and it also goes into a drive in the department to ensure that, not only the record lives in a paper format, but there are also redundancies to make sure that our records can be located in the event of a catastrophic emergency. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not sure what the acronym CIS means, and it feels really early right now, so that's okay. When a record of a check-in is entered into any kind of information capturing system, what are the prompts within that entry of information that compel action when there is evidence that a child or youth is struggling, possibly? We talk about children being suicidal or at risk for further abuse. What within that system prompts action and what are the accountability lines to ensure that there is action taken? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think this goes to some extent to my comment yesterday, where social workers are constantly in a sort of risk assessment phase, and I think if there is ever any sense of suicidal ideology or evidence to support the conclusion that a child is a risk because they are perhaps feeling these kinds of thoughts, we have established a standardized a standardized protocol for responding to reports of this nature within the department to ensure that they adhere to the standards and procedures.

We initiate immediate reporting to relevant interrelated agencies who have care for these specific matters, such as mental health and the RCMP. We follow up through a thorough screening and investigation process with collaborative efforts involving support service agencies to provide assistance to them.

Honestly, I think this Committee is fully aware of the high rate of suicide in our communities, and we recognize, as a department, that we need to do more to prevent it. I think we recognize, as a government, that we need to prevent it and perhaps if the Chair will allow, my colleague, Ms. Hunt might be able to speak more specifically on the programs that are available to children in foster care when we are working collaboratively. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Hunt.

**Ms. Hunt** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you for the question, Member. Maybe I can just build off of my colleague's comments around the system. I think what we heard yesterday,

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is that the current system doesn't have the prompts. The system that is being used now in the testing phase, that Mr. Ellsworth talked about, actually provides those checks and balances and prompts to the different areas of Family Services to ensure that information is captured, and then social workers are then prompted for follow-up or aspects of their duties that come next in terms of checks and follow-up referrals, closing file and those kinds of things. Just to clarify what we heard yesterday; I hope that answers the Member's question around the information system.

In terms of services, there are a number of services that we talked about vesterday for children and families, especially from a mental health and an addictions side of things. So of course, we know that we have the up-coming addition treatment centre that will be here in 2025, which we are very excited about. We have many of the landbased healing programs that we fund local community organizations to facilitate. We have the healing by talking program. Of course, we have our health centres where we have nurses and other helping professionals so that if there is an immediate crisis or urgent risk to a child, that there is a place for them to be assessed and services for them to receive.

We also have out-of-territory services for children and families as well, if they are struggling or we don't have the level of care for their emerging or acute needs in terms of their crisis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is there a child welfare specialist or are there positions...? I know we have the children and youth advocate. Are there specific positions that are meant to liaise directly with children and foster parents in order to

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communicate and take action for children? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is one of the functional roles of most social workers. This goes to my point around adding additional resources so that we can have specialized positions put in place that speak directly to the Member's point. As I mentioned yesterday, many of our social workers are very busy with protection, but not necessarily busy enough with prevention because we don't have the capacity to do that.

Each social worker has responsibilities for prevention, protection, permanency planning, foster care check-ins, and these kinds of things. We don't presently have someone that is specifically dedicated for that role, but that is something that the strategic plan hopes to respond to. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm like a squirrel because you mentioned permanency planning. I would like to go to the Office of the Auditor General and ask: did the audit measure any data regarding whether permanency is achieved through reunification, adoption, guardianship, or living with a relative within a period of, for example, 12 months of children entering foster care? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you. The audit did not look at those facts. We were focusing in on the activities of the department to check in and to monitor, and the actions taken, for example, when children and youth were out-of-territory, to bring them back, but we did not look at the permanency questions that

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Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to give everybody a chance to engage here.

I'll just go back to my questions regarding check-ins. Are there any check-ins with the parents of the children who are in care? Are there regular check-ins, and if so, who is conducting those check-ins? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The standards require that there be monthly check-ins with all parties involved in any specific matter.

As I mentioned yesterday, oftentimes there may be one or more children involved in the house where there are protection concerns where perhaps, as a matter of an intermediate result, they are either placed in foster care on short-term or on a long-term depending on the nature and status of the proceedings, but regular check-ins happen not only with the child, but also with the parents of those children. It's also the role of the social worker to assist parents in achieving positive outcomes when they're struggling, whatever the case might be for those individuals, that brought them into contact with our social workers. Their role is to support the parents as well.

Again, I think the department can be doing much better as it pertains to providing services to parents and working towards reuniting the family. I believe, again, that we have been really focused on protection, but we need to do more on prevention, and we need to do more in the sense of making sure

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there is access to programming and services that parents can undergo or access so that we can eventually reunite those families. We are operating in the best interest of the children, but taking into consideration the importance that cellular unit, there is a cognizant recognition that we need to do more, and we intend to do that through the implementation of the strategic plan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With the knowledge that reunification is ultimately the hope when we are helping children navigate their lives, how often are parents, when appropriate, allowed to check in with their children who are in foster care? That's in-territory and outside-of-territory. I guess this is a couple of questions. How does it happen in-territory and how does it happen when children are in care out of territory? How many visits do parents get, again, when appropriate, recognizing that sometimes it might not be safe for the check-ins to happen? How often do they happen, how do they happen and who supports that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't speak to the frequency with which those visits happen; I can seek to obtain that information for you, Ma'am.

I can say, however, that of course we make best efforts to make those access visits happen regularly and that usually happens not only through the social worker but the child protection specialist, and this goes a little bit into your question previously where I didn't have a clear answer for you, Ma'am, the adoption specialist where there are adoptive parents or long-term permanency

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Δd<sup>6</sup>/<sub>6</sub>C<sup>6</sup>/<sup>6</sup>C<sup>6</sup>/<sup>6</sup>C<sup>6</sup>/<sup>6</sup>C<sup>6</sup>/<sup>6</sup>, Δ<sup>6</sup>γ«Ρ<sup>6</sup>/<sup>6</sup>.

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planning happening, and then when it comes to out-of-territory engagements with children and parents, there's an inter-jurisdictional specialist position that manages those functions in consult with not only the receiving jurisdiction but also with where the children are placed in foster care. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When family visits do occur, is there a check-in by the appropriate worker or the people that are carrying the file, is there a required follow-up check-in with the parents or family members that have had the opportunity to spend time with their children to discuss any concerns or needs that a child may have brought to their family members?

Because we know that even when children are removed from their homes, their attachment, hopefully, is to their parents and to their family and the maintenance of that attachment is.... There's evidence that we could probably speak for days on about how important attachment theory is when it comes to building healthy individuals.

To ensure that children who are approaching a trusted adult with their own issues, concerns, and experiences to support the adult's agency to advocate for their child or their child family member, even if they are not in their care, is of utmost importance when it comes to helping to rebuild and maintain those relationships.

How often do family services workers check in with those responsible adults to find out whether or not there are issues of concern that the children haven't felt safe or been able to express to the adults in their foster care situation? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  $\begin{array}{lll} & \wedge^{\nu} \wedge \wedge^{$ 

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Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The regular check-ins happen, as I described yesterday. If I understand the question of the Member, you're looking for direct information respecting what steps are taken to assess how that child's safety is within the framework of their foster home. Is that fair? As I mentioned yesterday, every other visit that occurs is done outside of the foster home to provide for an environment where the child can feel free to share any of those concerns that may be arising in the course of their care plan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you. I'm really talking about record-keeping, right? When we're capturing information on the child's experience within our system, we are creating evidence that will allow us to make evidence-based decisions about the care of these children. When there is any discussion with anybody who is an advocate for those children, where is that information captured and is there a standard for capturing that information?

Okay, I just thought of another question. I'll stop with that question and jot this one down. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Ms. Brewster. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again I apologize if I missed that brand of the question. The standards of recordkeeping would be similar to that that we just described earlier. There are case notes that are produced. Those case notes are stored within the file system. There are ticklers that alert supervisors to review and update those case notes and ensure that the oversight is

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happening in accordance with the standard. There is regular engagement with and between managers, supervisors, and frontline individuals to make sure that those records are at a standard that are based not only in the standards that are articulated for social workers but the recordkeeping standards that I think the Auditor General noted that we fell short of.

I believe that answers your question, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. Mr. Hayes wants to chime in, but before he does, I'm not sure you fully answered Ms. Brewster's question. From what I understand, does a family visit to a child in foster care trigger a caseworker to follow up with the family to make sure that the child hasn't disclosed anything of discomfort or any concerns to the family member? Is there a trigger after a family visit for a caseworker to follow up with the family member that visited? I think that's where Ms. Brewster was going. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, there is. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Listening to the responses from the Deputy Minister, I felt like I needed to add that, as the Deputy Minister just acknowledged, we found that the recordkeeping and information management practices did not comply with the Government of Nunavut's policies on record management.

The aspects that Mr. Ellsworth was covering relate to things that should happen. There isn't evidence that they were happening, and that's important. The manuals are there, they say what's supposed to happen, and that's

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what Mr. Ellsworth is talking about. Our concern is that on an outcome level, on a substantive level, these things have to happen, and we have seen gaps where there isn't a check-in, there isn't a follow up. I wanted to make that clear that as we're talking about what should happen, it's where we need to focus the lens in the future. Thank you.

I might just ask Mr. McKenzie, I know he has something that he wanted to add in relation to a previous question, if that's okay, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Hayes. Mr. McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to follow up. The Hon. Member had asked a question earlier about the accountability for doing the check-in. The standards, as Deputy Ellsworth had talked about, have certain requirements in terms of timelines. There are documentation requirements to capture that information, but there are also roles laid out in the manual for the supervisor and the regional managers to play that oversight role to see if, in fact, the file is being maintained up to date to make sure that those types of activities, check-ins, are taking place. It really speaks to that. There's the accountability or the requirement to do something, but there's also that oversight role.

I would like to just draw or underline the importance of having that new information system that if it does have triggers or prompts to say, "Okay, this hasn't been done or it hasn't been captured," and just to go one step further, which is and it kind of ties into, I believe, your comment about making evidence-based decisions, is if the system not only triggers or prompts people to follow up on something, but if there is a reporting

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function that allows the department and the management to look at the issues and how are we performing against those standards. It helps. I would say that it would help them inform decisions or help answer questions about why is that happening. Is it a function of workload, which can trigger questions around capacity issues? Is it training? Is it awareness of the standards, again, which ties into training?

I think it's not only the tool or the information management system has a role to play in terms of triggering, but allowing for that kind of monitoring and reporting, which supports the oversight role, which we had talked yesterday about supporting the community social service workers, the face of the department. They play a key and complex role, a very difficult, challenging role, and I think it is incumbent upon the supervisors, the regional managers, and management overall to be able to look at what's happening and make decisions so that those people are best supported.

Just again, to maybe tie in the quality assurance function, which has been discussed as being part of the strategic plan, I think, is also something that ties into that as well because that will also inform those types of or help answer some of those questions if there are some issues around compliance with the standards. Why is it and how can the department move forward to make sure that those issues, not issues, but those, in fact, looking at the outcome so that the children and the youth are in fact receiving the care that any risks or issues that they're dealing with can be addressed and that the foster parents and the families are all being supported.

There are multiple aspects to it, but again, I just wanted to emphasize that there's an oversight and a monitoring role that I think

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has an important role here as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that, Mr. McKenzie. Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. McKenzie. In your review of those standards, are supervisors compelled to do their own internal audit of those files on a regular basis and, if so, when and how often? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Although I'll check, but I believe it's certainly on a regular basis and monthly, they're supposed to check and see if in fact the files are being maintained and kept up to date, and then obviously helping the community social service worker address if there is anything that's missing. I believe that I would have to double-check just to confirm it, maybe on a quarterly basis for the regional managers, but I can confirm that.

In terms of our review of the files, that's where we saw that there were gaps, that there was no evidence of that taking place. That's certainly one that's an issue, but also again, the information management system or practices, if you will, that Mr. Hayes had mentioned as well plays into that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a question to the Government of Nunavut, how many regional manager positions are there and are they all filled? Are there any vacancies? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

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Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the witness can give us an overview of their roles and responsibilities, it would be great. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All family wellness supervisors and managers possess extensive clinical experience as it pertains to social work, some of whom have degrees, others of whom have masters in social work, so their roles are really rooted and grounded in extensive social work backgrounds. Their essential function is to ensure the oversight of the frontline individuals that are providing the service, not only to ensure that their decisions are based in clinical and appropriate responses to the specific need of the client, but also to ensure they align with standards, procedures, and best practice when it comes to social work.

In addition to their supervisory and oversight roles, they also play a role in mentoring junior staff, providing peer support, ensuring that job functions are being carried out appropriately, ensuring that staff have access to learning opportunities and other resources that may be required in the context of developing them to have more skills. Essentially, the manager function is also a conduit to the regional director function, who of course, plays a broader oversight role in

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the context of the discharge of the department's mandate. Like many other hierarchies in Nunavut, the frontline works really closely with the regional manager to ensure that services are consistent and that there are adequate resources available.

I think it is very clear; on the face of the Auditor General's report, Mr. Chairman, that we don't have adequate resources to be discharging our duties in a way that aligns with the mandate, which is, as I mentioned yesterday, one of the core reasons why we will be bringing a budget for consideration to this Assembly that will seek to address that very real concern. To the Member's specific question: I believe I've answered it, but essentially the managers work closely with the supervisors, who supervise the frontline. It is a series of oversight processes. If the Committee so desires, I would be happy to provide job descriptions for those positions for the Committee's reference moving forward.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to be really clear and really cautious about discussing the minutia of who is employed where, given it is a small territory and we're talking about a small number of employees. I want to make it 100 percent clear that we are talking about systemic issues and not individuals, and I want to reassure those employees who may be listening. My questions are about improving your ability to complete the very important tasks you have within your role.

With that, I would like to know whether or not these teams of regional managers and supervisors have come together, pulled together since the audit was tabled, in order to give their informed opinions and advise about how to address the issues that have

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been raised within this audit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to tell the member that we just last week had a very focused two-day discussion through the lens of receiving their input into our response. As I mentioned in the Committee yesterday, our response needs to reflect not only the social work component of responding to the Auditor General's findings, but it has to be built through the collaboration with not only internal teammates, but external teammates like our colleagues at Health, HR, NHC, and CGS. I know that I am being a little long-winded, but I really truly believe that this plan needs to reflect all of us. It needs to look like all of us. It needs to be sustainable and in order for it to be sustainable, the specific 'what actions' and the 'how actions' need to be defined through collaboration with our clinical professionals at all levels of the wellness division.

To answer your question, last week we met as a unit for this specific purpose. Prior to that, there have been regular meetings with the wellness division teams and team leads to define what our immediate response was going to be following the release of this audit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know if it is appropriate, but I would like to hear from the government witnesses about what the main concerns are. How did that team define the most crucial next steps to take, and did they define that? If so, what are the actions being taken based on that advise? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The initial focus was on the urgent need to protect children and youth and to support families who are receiving services. The initial piece to that, as I mentioned earlier, was a course correction with respect to engagements with families, ensuring that the investigative processes were undertaken appropriately, ensuring that regular check-ins were being done; basically, a direct response to all their findings but relevant to all of our case files. If the Committee will allow, I'll go through the 14 high-level key pieces of our strategic plan, which I don't think I made submissions yesterday, Mr. Chairman. I will be brief. Sir.

The initial one was, as I mentioned earlier was to focus on the urgent needs to protect children and youth and families. We need to, obviously, develop and implement a staff retention strategy addressing the identified gaps and barriers including training, onboarding, mentorship, career development, and professional development. We need to engage communities in the development of a child welfare strategy that prioritizes safety. Of course, we have committed to a whole-of-government and collaborative approach through the lens of arriving at a plan that we can all be owners of.

We are in the process, as you know, as I stated; reorganizing our family wellness of the Family Services department to realize efficiencies and to ensure adequate staffing and skill sets are there at all levels of the organization. During the course of this process, one of the key components of it, is improving the standards, procedures, and quality of service.

As I mentioned yesterday, we have engaged a resource to help us achieve that. We are

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going to dedicate time and resources for enhanced Inuit-specific prevention planning, early intervention, and family support. We want to deepen supports and maintain contact with children and youth who are out-ofterritory. Of course, that is a key component of the strategic plan, Mr. Chairman.

We want to better prepare and support foster parents, kinship caregivers, and adoptive parents. We want to amend adoption legislation, as I described yesterday, Mr. Chairman, plan for, collect, analyze data needed to be fully accountable, and respond to emerging issues and changing needs through the lens of transparency, Mr. Chairman. We want create working groups and supplementation plans to ensure that the implementation of our strategic plan is successful, and we are all working to support transformational change within the department through our external engagements with, as I mentioned yesterday, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, regional Inuit organizations, Maliiganik Tukisiiniakvik, and the Representative for Children and Youth.

Paramount to all of this, Mr. Chairman, is that we want to be accountable to Nunavummiut, we want to be transparent, we want to ensure that we can rebuild the trust that has been eroded over the course of many years.

Mr. Chairman, we recognize that this reality has not changed in twenty years. The Auditor General's report clearly articulates that change has not happened. We want to be that change and the core group of social workers that we've been engaging with, and not only with social workers, but across the department as a preliminary step, is really important, again, to making sure that our strategic plan is reflective of the clinical aspects of the deficiencies that the

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department has.

Mr. Chairman, I really hope for the support of this Committee, and Nunavut generally, as we work to achieve the final development and implementation of this plan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth, for that information. I think that a lot of the things you discuss were a lot of the commitments that were made back in 2014 and I think the trust that you are asking for, I think, is going to have to be earned over the next little while, from this Committee with the follow-ups of some of those commitments that were made, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you for that, Mr. Ellsworth. The 11th commitment is to plan for, collect, and analyze data. What we are talking about are those standards that you have in place already that require, already, introspection through audits and monitoring. I would like to hear more about where that breakdown is occurring because there are a number of managers, directors, and supervisors who are responsible for implementing those standards and to ensure that employees at all levels who are accountable to those standards are implementing those standards. I would like to know where those barriers are and what is being done immediately to address the lack of implementation of those standards. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I stated earlier in one of my submissions, we immediately took steps to ensure that these standards were being met and admittedly we are not all the way there. I can't say with confidence that we are achieving compliance with standards

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because, quite frankly, I think the Report of the Auditor General clearly articulates the barriers that are in front of us.

Some of the barriers include funding. They also include staffing, access to housing, and access to facilities. So when we take together the transient nature of a lot of our social workers, our inability as a department to adequately equip them to do the jobs, it really puts regional managers or supervisors into continuous training cycles, which don't result in outcomes that will seek to achieve these standards. Despite the fact that we have taken steps to ensure that there is a focus on standards and there is a focus on onboarding training, we are a ways away from being at a place where I could sit here and honestly tell you that we are compliant with them.

I would not want to mislead this Committee. In all honesty, there is a lot of work that we need to do to change what that employment framework looks like; move away from the four-month contracts, bolster the supports for the frontline, and implement the proper information tracking system as a complementary tool to the immediate actions we have taken to address this very serious issue. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yesterday, Mr. Ellsworth mentioned that there isn't a clinical oversight body for social workers in Nunavut. My background in health has me well informed about how important those bodies are in terms of holding the clinicians accountable for ensuring that they are working to the degree of clinical standards that are expected of them in their professions. Is that part of the plan; to ensure that there is a clinical oversight body that employees can be a part of? It is not just about accountability; it's

 $^{\circ}$ ησερουριστίος ησερουριστικός ᡃᢐ᠋ᠪᠵ᠘᠘ᠺ᠘᠘᠙᠘᠙᠘᠙᠘᠙᠘᠙᠘ . >°°b°°C>γL√σ°. CΔbσ ′b°∩>'L°ŪCΔĊ° ᡃᡉᢦ᠘᠘᠙ᠳ᠘ᡧ᠘ ₽ჀჼႺჼჄჅႷႮႱႺ*ჼ*₽₽Ŷ₽₽₽₽₽₽₽₽ ᡩᡳ᠘᠆᠙ᢗᢆᡲᡟ᠘ᢤᡠ᠅ᠹᡆ᠌᠌᠌ᠪᢣᠸ᠋᠘᠈ᢣᡣᠦ᠍ ᢀᠳ᠙ᢤ᠘ᢆᡎ᠘ᡲᠳ᠙᠘ᡧ᠘ᢤ᠘ᢤ᠘ᡧ᠘᠙ᠳ C°\$a 602845LLC 6600LL0C  $\Delta$ 6746C66 (DİANJC): 5d56 $\Delta$ FL FLC  $\Delta$ 65484C. **Δρ<sup>ε</sup>ιΘσ** (Ͻϳλληυς): <sup>1</sup>dγ<sup>2</sup>αΓ΄, Δ<sup>1</sup>γ<βρ(ς<sup>1</sup>6.  $C^{L}C^{5}$  $C^{L}L^{5}$  $^{L}L^{5}$  $^{L}L^{5$ 'b∿სJ⁰b°σ%, Γ\C <u>C</u>ΔΥϽʹ° Ϲʹα ᡠᠪᢣᡝ᠋᠘ᢏᢗ᠘ᡶᢀ᠂᠙᠐ᢣ᠘ᡎᢗᠪ᠕ᢛᡆ᠂ᡗ᠇᠘ᢗᢕᡥ.  $Arr CVF_0$  PF+4U+1CrF44764000 DappCQLQ2000 20C917499 PC&PC71977CD ᡏᡆᢣ<sup>ᠲ</sup>ᡆᡤᢆᢀ᠂᠘ᢣᢇ᠙ᢣᢗ<sup>ᡩ</sup>ᢀ.  $\Gamma^{\prime}C$   $\subset\Delta^{\prime}C^{\circ}$ . **ϲΔϤ϶϶** (ϽϤ϶϶ͺͿʹ϶, ΔϤ϶϶, ΔϤΑΑΙ, Α  $^{\circ}\Delta$ C%) $^{\circ}$ O'\ᡣ᠋᠐᠘᠙᠕᠘᠘᠘᠘᠘ ᡥ᠐᠘᠘᠘ᢏ᠘ᠳ᠘᠙᠙ᡚ᠘᠘᠙᠘᠘᠙᠘᠙  $\Delta^{6}$ ▷°€∴° ▷d
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also about advocacy, right?

There is a huge role to be played within those oversight bodies to ensure that the standards of care that are being provided by those professionals are uplifted and supported by the governing organization, or the governance of a territory or a province, to ensure that their working conditions are such that they can live up to those standards. If they are not up to those standards, that that oversight body can have the role of advocating to the government to ensure that those resources are available in order to allow people to live up to those clinical standards in their work.

The question was at the beginning of that. I hope Mr. Ellsworth picked it up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. I believe Mr. Ellsworth mentioned yesterday that there was no regulatory body for social workers, but I'm not sure if there are any regulatory bodies for other professions within the Family Services realm. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe the question is whether or not we are looking at that. I think, of course, we are looking at all options right now in terms of what we can to better equip the social workers. One piece is, of course, a regulatory body that would oversee, not only to ensure that there is competency in the ranks of our social workers, but also that they are required to abide by ethical and standard guidelines, much like the law society does for the lawyers and the College of Physicians does for doctors.

That kind of step, of course, I would wholeheartedly support it, recognizing, however, that step would require legislative amendments to, I would imagine, the *Child* 

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and Family Services Act, or enacting a different kind of piece of legislation and would also require the establishment, by law or regulatory means, of such. I do agree with the Member that it would be an important piece in terms of making sure that those standards can be upheld and that there is a place for social workers to receive advice, and it could quite possibly play an advocacy role in the sense of ensuring that the work... although this is kind of, I think, moving into the union business to some extent, but to ensure that the work standards are at a level that is conducive of proper social work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: If we could just go back to the human aspect of this issue, I think it would be helpful. I know I personally have experience with extended family within the foster care system and as a foster parent as well.

This is to the Government of Nunavut. If we could just have a brief walkthrough of what happens when an issue of concern is raised about a child and what exactly the steps are to the process that comes to the creation of a plan of care. I know it might be a lot to ask, however, I think it's really important to go through that process so that we can have a clear understanding of just who is involved and at what stages, because we have heard that we know that communities have a role. that educators have a role, that the RCMP might have a role, and having a clear understanding of who can talk to whom and when, I think, will help to make it a little bit clearer about where some of the barriers to care are. Is that too much to ask? Is it too much? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Ms. Brewster. There might be so many different variables within

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that scenario that it might be difficult, but maybe if Mr. Ellsworth could just kind of give us a streamline of, I don't want to say an average case, because that's not the right terminology either here, but there are so many different variables in somebody's needs to be assessed. Maybe Mr. Ellsworth could just kind of lay the foundation of the question that Ms. Brewster is asking in more of a general occurrence. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I understand it, and I won't purport to be a clinical specialist by any means, and I do need to do some homework on processes, recognizing that I'm more involved in sort of system-level activities.

However, upon a referral being made, as mentioned yesterday, an investigation ensues, there is safety assessment. I think the question was around plan of care, so a plan of care committee may be established, and that plan of care committee can include people such as parents, any involved party that plays a care role in the child's life, and others. If the plan of care is, of course, the path by which they need to go down, a plan of care is usually where there is an ongoing concern, but there could be something called 'voluntary support agreement' where the parents have specific needs that need to be addressed to get them to be able to get them to a place that would resolve the initial concerns.

There is a structured decision-making chart in my materials here. If you could just give me a brief indulgence, I will locate that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for that. I'll just scale back and start from square one just so I'm getting this appropriately for the record. There is a report or a referral, it might be received either in person or by phone or in writing. There is a screening report that's

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conducted. The screening report will define whether or not follow-up is required or if an investigation is required. Based on the assessment on whether an investigation is required, if it's determined yes, then apparently, I need to go to the investigation flow chart, I'll get there. If no investigation required, there are other options like the voluntary support agreement or other service needs that may be required.

During the course of the investigation, of course, the first piece of it is gathering information and interviewing relevant witnesses. The structured decision making is a chart that highlights, based on concerns, there are numbers that are attached to the decisions that would identify whether or not there is a child protection or family violence issue. From that step, there are several arrows here and I'll try to make this as understandable as possible.

When the investigation is completed and if it's determined that the child is at immediate risk, then that child is apprehended, and that apprehension has to be in compliance with standard 301. If the investigation determines that the child is not at risk, then they go down the path of defining what they can do to provide services to that family.

A file has, of course, been opened and an investigation outcome defines what types of services and then, depending on whether or not there are ongoing protection needs, the community social services worker will work with legal counsel because a court application has to be made within 72 hours of apprehension to confirm the validity of the initial apprehension.

Then there is another whole court procedure that goes along with that. However, as I mentioned, where the child is returned within the 72 hours, then social workers in consult

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with their supervisors and other interested parties develop plans of care or different means to ensure that the needs of that family are addressed. I hope that answers your question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to go a little bit deeper into these plan of care committees. I'm just trying to remember if we discussed this yesterday because we have discussed quite a bit. Does the department follow the appropriate legislation regarding plans of care and what is that legislation? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The relevant legislation would be the *Child and Family Services Act*. Plans of care are contemplated within relevant provisions of that legislation. Just to go a little further, I think earlier you asked who might be included in those plans of care, Ms. Brewster. I do have better information before me now. Basically, the person with lawful custody is part the plan of care committee, the child, and a social worker. It could be in addition, members of the child's extended family if the majority of the members consider it suitable, and other service providers can be part of that.

The framework allows for a community that.... There are also provisions in the Act that allow for community-level wellness committees and planning committees and such. I don't think those have been engaged to the extent that they could and this is why, again, working with communities and regional Inuit organizations to define what preventative roles others could take in the context of child welfare in Nunavut will be really important as we move towards

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resolving the concerns that were identified in the Office of the Auditor General's performance audit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Ms. Brewster, do you have any other comments?

**Ms. Brewster**: I do have some questions on reunification, however, I have so many notes here that I seem to have misplaced them, so I will accede to which ever Member has questions prepared. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The issues identified related to foster care in the Auditor General's report are, again, quite alarming with regard to the lack of oversight of the children in care as well as required screening of potential and current foster homes. I have a few different lines of questioning for the Government of Nunavut officials.

First, I would like to look at page 7, paragraph 26. In the OAG report, it indicates that there were 180 children and youth in foster care in Nunavut. However, looking at the director's most recent annual report on family wellness on page 22, it indicates that there are 222 children in foster care in the territory.

I would like to ask for the rationale for the discrepancy between the OAG figures as well as the Department of Family Services. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for asking that question, Mr. Lightstone. I have asked the Minister a number of times in question period on how many children are in out-of-territory care and I keep getting different

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numbers. Seeing the source of where those numbers come from would be interesting. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is not clear to me why there would be a discrepancy, but I would imagine the report you are referring to is the annual report required under the Act. I believe the one you have referenced Sir, is 2122. My sense of that would be that that report reflects timing between April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022. You'll note at paragraph 26 that this number is reflective of August 2022, so I think there can be fluctuation in that number. I would have to go back and reconcile it, and certainly, I would be happy to do that.

Again, I think also to your point, why there is a deviation is simply that that number doesn't stay static. It does go up; it does go down depending on the nature of our involvement with families. Sometimes it's not a permanent foster care placement. Sometimes it's an intermediary step while we address, or while parents and families address other needs that they may have. They may go down as a result of reunification with families, and so that I think that would speak to the discrepancy that you have identified, Sir, and certainly I would be happy to provide additional information if you wish.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that response. Understanding that the numbers of children in foster care will fluctuate, however, the timing and the numbers from March 31 in the annual report of the director of Family Services indicates that there were 222, and then just a few months later, in August 2022, the OAG's report indicated that there were 180. So that is a difference of about 40 children, or in the range of about 20 to 25 percent, of

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fluctuation or variable. I definitely would appreciate receiving any sort of reconciliation to show how and why those numbers had changed so drastically in just a few months' time.

I'm going to focus my next series of questioning on the lack of oversight and the check-ins that are required for children in foster care. I'm assuming that many of these failures to either document check-ins or actually conduct check-ins may be correlated to staffing levels in communities. I would like to ask if the Department of Family Services can clarify as to whether check-ins do occur as and when required, or if it's just failure to document. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Just before I go to Mr. Ellsworth, Mr. Hayes, I believe, wanted to address the number discrepancy in the number of cases. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you, very much for the opportunity to respond. Our number of 180, which was as of August 2022, has to be placed in perspective. We did qualify that number by saying that we couldn't confirm the accuracy of it and that it was because of the unreliable information that we got from the department.

Effectively, the problem was with completeness, so we asked for lists of children in foster care, and not every area was able to provide that to us. What I would say in response to your question of the comparison; it's concerning to us even more so, that the department is able to produce an annual report as of March 31 with 222, but then four months later is not in a position to provide us with information that can be reliably and accurately looked at. I think it points back to some of the root causes; again, staff shortages, information management, but

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it is a major problem to not have a clear picture at any point in time of the number of children that are in foster care.

In all honesty, the department should be able to tell you every day exactly how many kids and youth are in foster care, where they are, and what is being done. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that, Mr. Hayes. Mr. Ellsworth, to Mr. Lightstone's question.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's a comedy of both Mr. Lightstone and to the Auditor General's point. It's clear on the face of the audit that the department...I mean, it's a crisis. We have effectively failed and we're here to admit that we have not done the best that we could. Recognizing that we now have this daily list, we know at any given second how many kids are receiving services, how many are in care, and these kinds of things.

Back to your point, Mr. Lightstone, during the material time of the audit, I'm not confident that the numbers that exist within the annual report that was tabled or even the numbers that were provided to the Auditor General's office were numbers that are reliable. That's an unfortunate reality that I seek to address and to respond to and have responded to internally, but in the longer term, of course, through the implementation of our strategic plan, this reality will not live with us any longer.

It's unacceptable and in my respectful submission, it really makes me sick to my stomach as a person and as a father that we could treat these kinds of things with such callousness. We need to do better. I aim to do better. I commit to Nunavummiut that we will do better and we have started to be better already, but we're committed to that

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objective, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. I appreciate your response. It gets to my next question that will be going out to either the Auditor General or the Department of Family Services. In your attempts to verify the number of children in foster care, I'm assuming that you attempted to look at the current client information system database to determine the number of children in care. My next question is: was there any follow-up attempt to verify those numbers through utilization of the financial information system by counting the number of payments that are going out to foster parents, which are tied to the number of foster children that they have in care? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In addition to auditing all the lists that the Auditor General made reference to, I'm glad you noted, Mr. Lightstone, that was one tool that I don't know that was reviewed, but it has been since the audit was released and certainly a very valuable tool because those payments oftentimes are automatic in nature and they're easily trackable through a detailed object payable report. To answer your question, that was one of the tools we use to audit those numbers and to ensure their veracity. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Remaining on the topic of check-ins and determining whether it's a staffing issue or a documentation issue, I would like to refer to the letter dated September 7, 2017 to the Standing Committee in relation to the

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Department of Family Services' progress report on the Office of the Auditor General's 2014 follow-up to the family services audit. In this letter, it indicates that the department has made considerable progress on all recommendations outlined in the follow-up report as the final *Quality Protects Action Plan* update and provides a schedule of actioned items.

One thing I'm concerned about with regard to information not being properly documented or procedures not being followed through, such as regular check-ins, and it's clear that the department does not currently have enough social worker positions to meet the demands. That was identified in the previous audits and one of the recommendations was to set and monitor workload standards.

In the department's response, it indicated that the Department of Family Services would develop workload standards for both generic and standardized caseloads in keeping with recognized best practices, as well as review other jurisdictions' child welfare programs to determine their current standards. It indicated in 2017 that the department will finalize these workload measures tools. I would like to ask if that workload measures tool was finalized because I'm very curious to find out what is the current caseload of social workers in small, medium and large communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did see in my letter to review a very, what I would call, superficial caseload analysis. It was based not on standards that are currently best practice. It was based on jurisdictions that don't reflect our communities, for example, non-indigenous child and family service delivery agencies. I think it was

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 $\Delta$ 6/46/C<sup>66</sup>:  $\Gamma$ 1/C  $\Delta$ 5-1/5/d<sup>c</sup>.

**Δ>՟՟>ዻ** (ጋ፟፟ነትበJ<sup>c</sup>): የፈታ<sub></sub> ሲቮ, Δ<sup>6</sup>ነላይርጐ. Δ<sup>6</sup>ነላይርጐ, የPናንነĽ ጋቦና ር<sup>6</sup>ፈላ ÞΔJ<sup>6</sup>ቦና C<sup>1</sup>L<sup>6</sup>6/L<sup>4</sup>7σፈ<sup>6</sup>6/D<sup>6</sup> ሲር<sup>6</sup>6<sup>6</sup>6<sup>6</sup> Pነላσ completed at the time. I mean, recognizing this is now six years ago, Sir, I don't know that they would be relevant for today's needs, particularly as it pertains to the prevention work that we need to be doing in our department.

I can advise that I have seen summarily some reports around what an appropriate caseload is in indigenous communities where we see higher levels of, perhaps, substance use or violence or other reasons why folks come into the social services realm. If I'm remembering correctly and I'm not speaking confidently here, just for the record, Mr. Chairman, I believe it was between 12 and 15 is the adequate number, but depending on the needs of those clients, it could change.

As I mentioned yesterday, the caseload analysis specific to Nunavut's needs has to be undertaken. What works even in other indigenous nations or communities doesn't necessarily mean it's going to work for Nunavut. As part of our strategic response, it's going to be really important to have a caseload analysis that is done through the lens of Nunavut's socio-economic reality and some of the social determinants of health and other sort of pieces around that.

Mr. Lightstone, again, I believe there was a caseload analysis done. I'm not confident that it was reflective of Nunavut's specific needs as it pertains to family services. I'm committed to making sure that that does occur going forward, not only through the lens of ensuring that families and children are receiving adequate services, but also through the lens of health and wellness for our colleagues at the Department of Family Services. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. I believe Mr. Onalik wanted to supplement the response. Mr. Onalik.

 $\Delta$ <sup>b</sup>/<sup>e</sup> $\wedge$ <sup>c</sup> $\cdot$ <sup>b</sup>:  $\Gamma$ <sup>i</sup>C H $\triangleleft$  $\Delta$ <sup>i</sup>.

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γ**LΔc** (ϽʹϞΛϽʹ): ʹϭͰʹʹͼͺϷʹͼͺ ΔͰʹϘϷϹʹ·. ʹϭͰʹ·ͼͺ Δϼϲʹͼͺ ϭΛͼͺʹͼͺϷʹͼͺ ϹͰʹͼ ϼͼͺϷ· ϒϲʹϲϭ ϹΔͰʹͼΔϲϓͰʹ·ϭʹͰͺʹ·ʹͼ·? Ϲʹ·ϭ ʹϧϷϒϒϤͼͺϭʹϧ·ϹϹͰʹͼͺϼͼͺϷ·ͺϒϲʹϲ ϹΔͰʹͼϪϲʹʹϭʹʹ·ͺͰʹʹϧʹͺΔͼͺʹϷϽʹ·, ϹͰ·ϧϤ ϹͰʹ϶ϭ ϼͼϲϧ·ʹϲ϶ͰϹʹϧ·ʹͺϼͼͺʹϧϲϧϧͺϧͺ ΔϒͺʹͰ϶ʹͼͺʹ϶ϽΔ·ͺϒͰʹ· ϹΔͰʹͼϪϽ·ϭʹͼ·ϽΔ·.

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Mr. Onalik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I think this is a really important point. Back to your comment, Mr. Chairman, on finding the assurance that this is going to be different this time, we need to do an accurate caseload analysis, but just even in the describing of what a job is for a social worker, as we have been back and forth this morning, it's more than a person can handle. In so many communities, we recognize that there is only one social worker and if you think of the context of all these interactions and check-ins that need to happen, foundational to the Government of Nunavut's response, and this is not only on the shoulders of Family Services, is we need more people to be doing the work here in order for this to be done properly.

I know that that's a big part of the direction we have been given across government because Family Services can't just instantly create positions. There's a process here and I just wanted to acknowledge the hard job this Assembly is going to have as we look at this year's budget. Is this an adequate response in terms of capacity and in terms of meeting the caseload standards? This is foundational to the GN responses, not only saying we have issues around processes and we have issues around information management. We need to make sure that we're not building a system where it's entirely dependent on a person doing 30 hours a day of work. We need to figure out how to get to a place where this is a manageable workload.

In the context of the question, this is a foundational response. Across the GN, this is the way we have been asked to look at this and this is a big part of what you all will be deliberating in the coming budget. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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**Chairman**: Thank you for that. Before I go back to Mr. Lightstone, we will take a 15-minute break. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 10:31 and resumed at 10:53

Chairman: Thank you. Welcome back, everyone. Office of the Auditor General's Report on Child and Family Services, we left the paragraphs 26 through 31 and Mr. Lightstone still had lines of questioning. Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Lightstone**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move on to the second theme under foster care and that's the required screening of foster homes.

In the Auditor General's report, they noted a significant percentage of required screening actions for 12 new foster homes were not completed by the Department of Family Services from January 2019 to March 2022. This is quite alarming. Of those 12 new foster homes, 83 percent did not provide criminal record checks and even more alarmingly, 50 percent of those new foster homes and parents did not provide vulnerable sector checks.

My first question is quite similar. It will be posed either to the OAG or the Department of Family Services. In your findings of these 12 new foster homes and their screening, was it that the screening did not happen or the documentation or evidence of the screening did not exist? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe it's both, perhaps. I think that the Auditor General noted yesterday that they need to be able to see evidence of these transactions happening. It is my view that the

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I think it's a comedy of both situations where the screenings may have been done but weren't done and/or weren't recorded to be done and therefore, we did not or weren't able to produce the appropriate level of documentary evidence that would find that finding different. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Mr. Hayes, you wanted to contribute as well.

**Mr. Hayes**: Yes, I'll add to that. The fact that these screening documents weren't on the files means that the social workers or the supervisors are not checking to see what should be followed up on, so even if they were done, but the documents aren't there, the problem is that the next step is not being done. We have a finding about this too. The department did not direct community social services workers or supervisors on what to do when the results of criminal or vulnerable sector checks had positive or possible matches. In order to even do something about that when there is a positive match, you have to know what the screening resulted in. As much as one could say, "Maybe these things were done; just not documented," the fact that they're not documented means that the necessary actions aren't taking place. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the elaboration on that. In the Auditor General's review, they had selected a sample size of 21 foster homes and of those 21 foster homes, it identified that 12 were new foster homes. Looking at the director's annual report, it does list the number of

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children in foster care, but it doesn't have any information about the actual number of foster homes or the number of new foster homes in a given year.

I was wondering if the Department of Family Services would be able to provide us with some information about the total number of foster homes, either current or as of the date of this audit, as well as the average number of new foster homes that the Department of Family Services acquires in an average year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Currently, of the 400 children that are receiving services from the Department of Family Services, 233 of the children and youth are in foster care. Of those 233 children in foster care, 146 are in placements with extended family and 87 are in non-familial foster homes.

Additionally, aside from foster placements, there are 146 children and youth who remain in the care and custody of their parents and who are receiving services through a service agreement, 20 are in contract placements with group homes in territory, and one youth aged 19 is residing on their own but receiving services through a voluntary service agreement.

With respect to the question around the average of new foster homes and such, I think it fluctuates and I haven't studied that specific matter. I can't tell you how many new homes, with the materials before me right now, that we have engaged in the last number of months and I agree that's a piece of information that should find its way into the annual reporting cycle. If the Committee and Chair will allow, I'm happy to provide that information in written form following

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these hearings, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you and we're looking forward to that. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth, for your response. I definitely would appreciate seeing that information at a later date, the total number of foster homes that those 87 children are placed in, as well as the average number of new foster homes in a given year.

In addition, one issue that has come up in the past is with the limited number of foster homes that are available to the Department of Family Services, on occasion and most likely in extenuating circumstances, some foster homes may become overcrowded to meet the demand.

When you do provide that information about foster homes, would you also be able to provide some statistical information about the number of children placed in those homes, the highest number, the average number, and so on? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that request and yes, I am happy to provide that information. Perhaps I can take this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to say that Mr. Lightstone, you're absolutely correct when you say that there are not enough foster homes in Nunavut. I don't know that the department has done enough to recruit and train foster parents and as a part of our strategic response, we aim to do that.

I'll take this opportunity, speaking to my community members and Nunavummiut who may be viewing this hearing, that we need incommunity foster care options. If you can bLΓγριΠασΔ°αιοσ. ριβργασΔ°αιοςς Ċ°α.

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find it in your heart and/or if you have a place for children to stay in emergent situations or in longer term situations, I encourage you to reach out to your community social worker or your regional social work team to indicate your interest in supporting our work in this regard.

One of the fundamental pieces of the work that social workers do is try to maintain a sentiment of normality for children in their lives as they go through very challenging and trauma-inducing times, struggling with realities that are not of their own volition, Mr. Chairman, and part of that is trying to keep them where we can, first with the nuclear family, second with extended family, but third in community placements where at least they know the people who they're seeing and they have can find, perhaps, some comfort in the fact that they can have regular and routine visits that we discussed earlier, Mr. Chairman, with their family and with extended family.

We really do need to enhance our capacity in this regard and I encourage Nunavummiut who are willing and able to please reach out to us because we would love to work with you and support you through the lens of ensuring that children can stay in community. That should be a primary goal for all of us sitting here and Nunavummiut, generally speaking, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. That's a good plug to save the department a few thousand dollars in advertising. Mr. Lightstone.

**Mr. Lightstone**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the Department of Family Services' efforts to keep children in their own homes wherever feasible and prioritizing extended family members to take

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In relation to the current foster care portfolio or database, does the department currently track the number of bedrooms, beds, and total number of children in designated houses/homes? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I can provide some information in terms of what goes into the screening of foster parents and homes through the lens of responding to your enquiry, Mr. Lightstone.

Prior to placing a child in any foster home, the standards dictate that we engage a process but fairly stringent or it's supposed to be a fairly stringent process, pertinent to first.... Sorry; I'm getting lots of pop-ups here that I don't.... I will share the process with you and it might be a little bit long, so if I'm getting too long, please just feel free to cut me off.

There are three types of foster homes. There are extended family homes where a child is fostered by a family member of theirs and the home is not open to other children. There are provisional homes. A child is fostered by someone who is known to them, and there are regular foster day homes, so foster homes are open to caring for any children within their ability and availability.

For provisional homes and extended family homes, Mr. Chairman, if the placement is to continue past the 72-hour threshold, which I described earlier, all documentation required for a regular file would be required as per the following timelines: within three days, a criminal record check, including a vulnerable sector check for anyone who is in the home. If a criminal record check is not immediately available, a consent for release by the

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prospective foster parents is signed so that we can obtain information from the RCMP with respect to any of their involvement with the police. There is a foster parent application, which is a detailed application that contemplates several factors as a person. There is a foster home agreement, which is reviewed. There is an oath of confidentiality because the confidentiality with respect to section 71, I believe, of the *Child and Family Services Act* extends to those foster parents, which means that they can't be speaking publicly about their involvement in the family and why the child is in their care.

Within five business days, Mr. Chairman, medical examinations are to be done on the child to assess the status of their medical health. A home study is completed, and I think that home study would go to your point, Mr. Lightstone, in the sense of assessing whether or not there is actual room in the home for a child or children and to ensure that minimum standards are respected.

There is a review of all of this documentation, not only by the social worker, but also by supervisors who ought to be involved, and within 10 business days, a decision is to be made based on the collection of information that was obtained during the course of this preparation.

The regular foster home approval process is that the foster parent completes an application and submits to the social worker for review, Mr. Chairman. Within three business days there is a departmental records check, and a social worker should discuss with their supervisor any concerns on file that may influence the applicant's ability to provide care. If a decision is made not to allow the applicant to foster, they will be thanked for their interest, but informed in writing that they are not eligible for that reason.

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Within five business days, again, the oath of confidentiality is executed, criminal records and vulnerable sector checks, medical examinations, and we need three references to support the application process to show that there is a general consensus of the applicability of the prospective foster parent.

Within ten business days, the social worker arranges to visit the home and conducts a final home study, and within 15 business days, the file is reviewed and a decision is made and communicated in writing to the applicants.

Just for the sake of the record, this decision made by the social worker in consult with their supervisor is appealable. So if prospective foster parents feel, if they weren't authorized to be a foster home, they can appeal that decision according to these standards. Of course, we first try to mediate the issues as between the social worker, supervisor, and prospective parents to find if there is common ground that we can achieve. If not, they can file their written appeal with the director of child and family services.

There is other mention of additional activities that occur, but I think that speaks, hopefully, Sir, to your enquiry. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Just before I go back to Mr. Lightstone, could I also ask you; you had mentioned there is an appeal process for prospective foster parents. What about existing foster parents that may have lost their approval? What steps would happen in that case? If they so desire, how would they get back into the foster system? Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a similar process. Usually, there have been

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situations as I understand it, where foster parents have been, for lack of a better term, unapproved, and a similar process; they would make their appeal to the director of child and family services and then based on their documentation, and of course, through the lens of mediation first, the director would make that decision. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

**Mr. Lightstone**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To speed things up, I'm just going to combine several questions.

Will the department provide the Committee with detailed information on foster homes, including bedroom size, number of beds, and total number of children?

The issue of screening and a significant percentage of foster homes that did not provide criminal record checks or vulnerable sector checks are a bit of a concern. It's a significant concern, actually.

My other question is: how often do foster parents have to provide updated criminal record and vulnerable sector checks? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I understand it, there's a review period. I believe it's every one year. I would need to confer with my colleagues, but I know that this is something that should be undergoing regular review and perhaps the frequency, in my mind, should probably be every six months, just because we know how quickly things can change for people. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

For the record, yes, I do commit to providing

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Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you again, Mr. Ellsworth. Moving on to the inability to confirm or provide evidence to support a number of very important matters related to family wellness, both the Auditor General as well as the Representative for Children and Youth have identified that as an issue.

Just a few years ago, the Department of Family Services created two quality assurance and testing positions to ensure that proper information was being documented. I would like to ask the Department of Family Services if they would be able to provide an update on the actual title of those two positions and the work that they have been doing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To your point, Mr. Lightstone, the title is "Territorial Quality Assurance Manager." I don't believe the position has been filled to date, but I can advise this Committee that if plans go according to plan, we have identified an individual who is ready to start the work in October.

The role and function of the quality assurance manager is to oversee the implementation of a robust quality assurance process. This sort of aligns with the implementation of our strategic plan and it's aimed at verifying the accuracy and adherence and uniformity to our standards. They will be tasked with conducting significant reviews of current best practices

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and proposing quality standards for client care and services within the realm of foster placements and such.

Among the primary responsibilities in addition to what I have just mentioned will be the establishment of performance improvement initiatives and the enforcement of compliance through additional check-ins and the facilitation of practice alignment throughout the department and the Government of Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, to move on to my final topic, in the director's annual report, there's reference to permanent placement with extended families or youth who have been in the system long term.... Sorry. Children who remain in the system long term must be provided with services that prepare them for life after they age out or reach the age of majority. It also indicates that these services are sorely needed in the territory. Without them, youth enter mainstream society ill-prepared.

It also states elsewhere that case management activities should prepare youth for becoming adults and ensuring that youth can perform basic life skills, such as laundry, shopping, maintaining personal hygiene, financial literacy, and so on, and should include employment readiness as well.

The report identifies that there are 53 children under the care of the director who are in the age 15 to 19 category and it also indicates that nine youth had transitioned out of care in that fiscal year.

The first question will be to the Office of the Auditor General. Throughout any of your audits, did you review the process that the

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Department of Family Services has for assisting and preparing youth who age out of the system? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Member, for the question. That is not an issue that we specifically looked at, but certainly, youth who age out of the system is an issue facing Nunavut. My understanding is in jurisdictions across the country, this is something that is an issue that is making sure that they have the programs and supports in place and coordination between departments who may be intervening with that person. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm posing the next question to the Department of Family Services. I was wondering if you would be able to elaborate on what sort of preparation is currently being offered to children in care prior to aging out. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under the *Child and Family Services Act*, if there is a permanent order in place for children, there's an obligation on the department to continue to provide services to them up to the age of 26, in fact, if I'm not mistaken.

With regard to your question, I would need to seek some information from my colleagues in the department to determine what exactly we do to prepare them to age out of the system. Mr. Chairman, if I could have that indulgence, I will share that information with the Committee as soon as I

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**Chairman**: Thank you. Again, we will look forward to that information. Thank you. The next name I have on my list: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, all. Nice day here in Iqaluit, which is nice. I've got a few questions here, they're all the same area, and we have discussed this quite a bit in depth and I apologize if one of my questions was kind of asked and already answered.

For the Family Services, in paragraph 28, the bottom portion, it says, "Alarmingly, we found that the department had no evidence of contact with the children or the foster home for extended periods including

- gaps of 6 to 8 months for 8 children in 4
   of the foster homes we examined
- no check-ins on 10 children in 6 foster homes for 12 months or more, including 2 foster homes with no check-ins during the 39-month period of our audit"

Now, just to be clear, I'm not trying to point fingers at anyone; I'm not doing the blaming game. I have a lot of respect for our frontline workers. They have a very thick skin and the biggest hearts.

I'm wondering: has the department examined how this happened, this lack of checking-ins, and did the department do a thorough review to see why it happened? My first question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Sammurtok): Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You look different than before.

>>Laughter

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Mr. Chairman, it's clear on the face of the audit the reasons why these matters arose. Quite frankly, the lack of documentation, the lack of capacity, the transient nature of our social workers, these are all sort of reasons that compounded the reality of why children weren't being followed up on. We immediately took the steps to implement monthly check-ins for all foster and out-of-territory children.

The process is monthly check-in for all staff during the first week of each month, extending to all clients, including, as I said, foster children, Mr. Chairman. The communication methods for such encompass phone calls, emails, and in-person visits. Workers were tasked with creating detailed documents containing information on the service agreements, including start dates, follow-up dates, and end dates, and they developed a scheduled calendar reminder for staff to ensure that this doesn't happen going forward. Mr. Chairman.

While the root causes, in my view, are not sufficient to excuse this kind of oversight on the part of the department as a whole, and I will echo your comments, Mr. Simailak, the work of the social workers is paramount and they have, perhaps, one of the most difficult roles in our communities in terms of providing services. The plan going forward, as I mentioned earlier, is that we will not be in a position where kids are not getting regular follow-ups moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

**Mr. Simailak**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. Again, to Family Services, if I can get a quick clarification, in the next paragraph, paragraph 29 of the audit report, "In the absence of check-ins, the

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department did not know about children's' well-being or safety, or their whereabouts, what kind of care they were receiving in their foster home, or whether the foster home was receiving any required support." In the first bullet, it says, "For example, we found that:

• The department leaned that 2 children it had not contacted for 4 months were no longer in their foster placement and were living elsewhere."

Was this happening only within territory or outside of territory as well? To the Family Services first. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have reviewed the substantiation sheets to the audit. However, I can't recall whether or not those are in or out of territory with reference to the cited paragraph. I believe, perhaps, the Auditor General may be able to indicate based on their records whether or not those two were in or out of territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Hayes.

**Mr. Hayes**: That example was in-territory, and in terms of the out-of-territory ones, the risk is there that that could happen as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. If I can ask the Department of Family Services to check their files to see if that happened outside of territory as well. I think it's important that they do a follow-up on that because if it's happening outside of territory, that's even scarier, kidnapping, getting lost in the city somewhere, it's a very serious threat concern coming from me.

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If I can move on, earlier, I believe, the Deputy Minister for Family Services mentioned that there has been an increased need for foster homes. I'm wondering: has the department identified the root cause as to why there is an increased need for foster homes? Is it only in certain communities or certain situations happening in those communities? Has that been identified? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the increased need arises for a number of reasons, one of which in my mind is this desire to keep kids in their home communities, the second of which is that we see enhanced usage of the provisional homes that I discussed earlier. Oftentimes there is a fear amongst family members or others in the community of reprisal, "Perhaps the foster placement is working with social services to keep my children away from me."

To answer your question, there are many reasons why we have this need to increase foster homes in Nunavut, Mr. Simailak and Mr. Chairman. Those are the three core ones, I think, in my mind, but again, the focus needs to be on providing resources to the social workers so that they can take care of the children's needs, providing foster parents with adequate training, support, and resources to ensure the ongoing safety of the children is there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman** (Mr. Hickes): Thank you. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There hasn't been identification as to the root cause of needing more foster homes, even if it's within territory, but is there like a high case of substance abuse needing to have

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children in foster care for a while or are there other issues? Has there been a root cause identified as to why these children do need to go into foster homes? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. I'm sure there are many different reasons, but maybe if Mr. Ellsworth just highlighted a couple of the more prominent causes. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think, if we look at any statistics around violence in our communities, you're going to note that they are consistently on the rise, particularly, as Ms. Brewster mentioned yesterday, children are oftentimes the victims of these realities. This is one of the root causes.

I can't say that we studied it, Mr. Simailak, and this is where it will be really important to get our data sets set up properly while we engage the implementation of our software solution so that we can look at those data sets and make informed decisions and policy and resource allocation decisions and assessments, directly to your point, in terms of why we're seeing an enhanced need for the use of foster placements.

Again, it's our role to make sure that children are safe. We would like to keep children incommunity. We do our best to do that with the very limited resources right now. Anyone, as I mentioned earlier, who wants to play a role in protecting children incommunity, I would encourage you to please be in touch with us.

I encourage the Members here to share that message in your community that we need more foster parents. It takes all of us. Yes, we will spend the advertising dollars to achieve that objective, Mr. Chairman, but I think we all know, who are sitting around

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this table, the best way of message sharing in a lot of Nunavut's communities is by having this dialogue open and transparent, in-yourface dialogue with our colleagues at the community level. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. To my earlier attempt at humour, I have seen your advertisements and I have heard the radio messages, so I know that you are advertising and searching out new foster families. I was just trying to make light of the heavy topic. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Minister. The reason why I was asking about root causes, in Baker Lake, I regularly stop into the Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachment, the social services office, and the health centre and I have asked them what they have noticed in the last few years and I got the same response from all three offices. Ever since Baker Lake went from restricted for alcohol to unrestricted, they see an increase in social issues. I have heard them say that their call-outs have tripled.

I'm wondering: is the department keeping track of changes in communities that happen like that? When you know a community is going to go to unrestricted alcohol, does the department look at that and say, "Okay, we're probably going to have to give extra attention to this community for the next little while," and does the department plan for that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we have all seen an increase in the consumption of alcohol in many of our communities, Iqaluit included, and a clear indication that substance use is a serious issue that affects many of our community

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mates. I can't honestly sit here and tell you that we watch for those trends, Mr. Simailak, but again using the tools that we intend to implement moving forward and being a little more proactive in our approach to social work, and when I say a little more, I mean a lot more. These are some of the things that we want to hear from individuals like yourselves around if, in a community, you want to see proactive measures taken because the community knows itself best.

As a department, we're not going purport to know what's best for you. This is where this piece around building our plan through dialogue and collaboration with communities is going to be really important. So as a part of our strategy, it's important for anyone the table, we will most definitely take steps to be proactive in these regards, recognizing that alcohol consumption can create very toxic realities for children. We need to have the resources on the ground, in advance, to ensure that we can respond to these realities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Deputy Minister, for your response. My last question, I think. I'm curious, what type of people are fostering children? I'm talking about like, do you have a database of if they're a single parent or if they're couples or if they are elders? If so, is the department ensuring that these foster homes are provided adequate support to help these children that are being fostered because it's bad enough that these children have to be fostered. I'd hate to see them go to a home that's not given adequate support by the department. If I can get a response. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Chairman**: Maybe I'll just ask for a clarification, Mr. Simailak. You're looking at

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**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have that information before me at the present time, with respect to the demographic of individuals who are acting as foster parents currently.

I can advise you that we do offer resources to foster parents to ensure that not only can they continue to support their family or their loved ones, but that they can also support the child being placed with them. There's per diem rates that range from \$58 to \$65 per day, depending on the community. I think sitting around the table, we recognize that that perhaps is not a value that is proportionate to the very important work that they are undertaking.

As a part our strategic response, we are looking at how can we better pay foster parents to ensure that not only their financial wellness is protected, but also the wellness from a mental health perspective of the children in care is taken care of and so I hope to return with options. Again, this analysis will be built on a series of other analyses that are currently underway respecting income assistance, guaranteed basic income, minimum wage. I think we'll all learn more about that in the coming sitting. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Just to remind members, we're on paragraphs 26-31. Any Committee Members have any other questions under this category? If not, we will proceed to... oh sorry, Ms. Killiktee. Go ahead.

**Ms. Killiktee** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wish to return to an earlier

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«Υἀνὸς Νασβοίς.

▷'ቴʰቴ॰σʔ°쇼ʔL, Γᡃጋ LPዻ°ት′ር▷'ۥ Δϲቦ⊲ʔLᡃᡥᡠŁʔ. 'd৮°쇼ቮል՞∿ὑጔʰ, Δʰፖ᠙▷Ċᡝۥ

**Δ<sup>6</sup>/«▷ርና** (ጋጎትበJና): <sup>ና</sup>ሪታ<sup>6</sup>α፫<sup>6</sup>, Γ<sup>1</sup>Ο ΗΔΔ<sup>1</sup>. Γ<sup>1</sup>Ο Lb<sup>2</sup>/.

question as I would like further clarification on it hence my query. With respect to homes that receive the title of foster homes, does the evaluation of the home include the assessment of adequate bedroom space, space for personal belongings, and whether the homeowner has prior experience in caring for vulnerable people, and is this assessed during this foster home application?

How does this evaluation process play out? As an example, if the home has been assessed by workers, the applicants are good people, and their children are brought up properly, nonetheless, it may be due to the lack of space or bedroom space, but they are very experienced in a family setting and are passionate about wanting to provide foster care, how is this weighted towards qualified families and has this weighting been used in the past?

Let's say, an elder has proven their capabilities by bringing up their children successfully, with love and in caring for children abandoned by other parents or youth, but due to their lack of space or number of bedrooms, how can their lack of space be accommodated to use their passion and commitment towards fostering children? Is this supported financially by our government? Mr. Chairman, that formulates my question which I would like to get clarification on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is an excellent question, Ma'am. I think we are all cognizant that Nunavut is currently also in a housing crisis, but we do have to recognize too that if homes are based on our assessment, too small, there needs to be some dialogue with that family and with those individuals to make decisions on whether or not they are willing acquiesce to not, sort of,

**LCP**: የdታ°αΓ<sup>6</sup>, Δ<sup>6</sup>/<βC<sup>6</sup>. Σ<sup>6</sup>ω<sup>6</sup>d.

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best situation in reality.

We think there is room for other incentives for foster parents, including elders and others, but there needs to be a detailed, I think in my view, review as part of our strategic plan to enhance the foster parent portfolio.

As the report has indicated, we haven't done well at even following up with foster parents. As a starting point we are doing that more regularly in accordance with standards, and now we need to retain additional foster parents; foster parents who might have access to elders in their lives or other cultural support mechanisms. All of which to say, and I hope this answers your question, Ma'am, is that more needs to be done. We need to look at incentivizing being a foster parent and making attractive not only from a community service perspective, but again, respecting the financial wellness of those families.

Often times I have seen firsthand where elders are relied on for very serious and significant resources, but they are not adequately compensated for their knowledge and skills. I think generally speaking, we need to be looking at this, and I believe under one of the previous governments there was, Mr. Chairman, a move towards identifying the criteria that establishes what an elder actually is. I don't know that any traction was ever made on that, but I think that, too would be a part of this assessment. I'm getting old, but I'm not very wise and I don't know that I have a lot of knowledge to impart for people.

So what I'm saying is there are a lot of elders who do have those skills, but there are other older people that aren't necessarily elders. I know I've gone on a little bit long here, but Mr. Chairman, this has to be reviewed

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**LcP**: 'dታ°ዺ፫<sup>6</sup>, Δ<sup>6</sup>/ペ▷Ċ<sup>6</sup>6. (ጋጎትበህ<sup>6</sup>) ጋዮ'b<sup>66</sup>><sup>16</sup>, ውሲዎና ሁዊĽ<sup>6</sup>6ና ውሲዎናር ተርርታናጋውና ርΔጎ°ተር<sup>66</sup>/ህበ▷ペና<sup>56</sup>7? 'dታ°ሲ፫<sup>6</sup>6, Δ<sup>6</sup>ታペ▷ር<sup>66</sup>6.

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የ/ላσ ላል<sup>2</sup>ን<sup>16</sup>/L/σ ላ<sup>2</sup>7,<sup>2</sup>7,<sup>2</sup> LC (10)<sup>2</sup> - 2 CΔ\<sup>2</sup>/ \chop \

**Δ°/<>▷**(ጋጎ,>∩ሆ): የd>°© 广°. ⊲∩የd∩°ö-Γረና° Γ′ >>̇\ጋ.

**> ''')** (ጋቫትበህና): ''dንቴሲቮቴ, Δቴ/ጳኦሮቴቴ.
''dንቴሲ፫ሩ' ኦበናተላናፒሁና. ለቦላናበቦጋΔቴሬናጋህ,
ጋየተናጋላቴቦቴጋሪቴጋቴし ውርቴይጋናርና ውሲዎና
ተርርሷቴርዕቴርኦር ላጋơ <''ሲኦበርኦጳቴጋላፕኒቴቪር
<'ቴየየትኦውቴኒቴቦቴሪና.

'ቴና/ፈኈበしং'<, ዾĊσና ጋ\ኈበርኦ'ቴር'ኈለረ, የካቴ' Δ∟ኦ९'<ና, ፈጐቦቲካቴሲአኦተ' ጋ Δ∟ቦአኦበርኦ९'<ና, ዾዺ፦ ኌጐ፞ኇና 'ቴዾ' Δ∟ኦበየርኦ९'<ና? 'ቴታ°ዺቮኑ, Δኑ/᠙ኦር'ኑ.

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through that lens and we need to do better. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that, Mr. Ellsworth. Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also appreciate the response I heard, and the answer was appropriate for the question. Nonetheless, I would like to just a comment only. There are some Inuit who are piqued by the idea of fostering fellow Inuit children, primarily from their home community and they are unable to care for all affected children due to the lack of space.

Another barrier they face is the amount of paperwork and protocols that must be followed because these form the foundation for the foster homes, such as the specific number of bedrooms, specific ages of foster children requiring their separate bedrooms without a roommate, as examples of how we, as Inuit, are required to practice certain matters in a foreign way, which we never practiced. Such are the colonial methods in stewardship.

I am just making that verbal assessment, as I wish to turn to this other matter I want to step into. I want to query you on it, as it was a while back where I heard you state, I'm not sure how to say the word in Inuktitut, specifically, (interpretation ends) 'standards.' About standards. (interpretation) The recommendations specific to these standards, have they already been drafted? Have you involved elders from Nunavut, or even wise elders, or local counsellors to develop and draft the amalgamated standards? I would like to ask if southern standards are being amended, although I cannot cite a specific example, as I can't recall one currently, but in hearing about this issue, I wrote it down and I have some questions on it.

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**> C** (ϽʹͱϒΛͿና): ʹͼͿϧ·ʹαͺΓ΄·, Δ<sup>ι</sup>/ΨΡϹʹ·<sup>1</sup>.

ΕΝΕΓΕΙΕ Α΄ ΕΝΕΓΕΙΕ

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**Δ⁰/<>୦୯** (ጋጎት∩J°): የ₫ታ°ΦӶ҆°. ୯୯ン Γ′ >>๋\ጋ?

**Δ<sup>6</sup>/«ΣΟΣ»** (Ͻϳ/ΣΠΟς): <sup>6</sup>σλ<sub>6</sub> Φ΄Ε. Γ<sup>1</sup>Ο ΔΣ<sup>6</sup>1 Φ<sup>6</sup>Ος.

I will try to ask the question in English. (interpretation ends) The standards that you mentioned earlier, are they adopted from the south? If they are, then has the work ever been done to work with elders or leaders to review the standards that your department follows to meet the criteria? (interpretation) I'm trying hard in English (interpretation) on behalf of those people. That's why I would really like to understand, much like the people we represent.

We have too many rules and laws that we are made to follow that have come from the south that we've been made to follow. None of our Inuit cultural practices have been included with them. Hopefully I am making myself understood. I apologize. (interpretation ends) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: No apologies necessary. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not satisfied that the current standards and procedures manual is built off a model of an Inuit-led response to child welfare needs. To the member's question, it doesn't reflect Inuit societal values, in my view. However, as part of our strategic plan, we've engaged a resource to assist with the review, development, and implementation of a revised standards procedure.

As part of this process, Mr. Chairman, key stakeholders including service practitioners and cultural knowledge holders and leaders and elders will be actively engaged to create a practical, comprehensive, and culturally competent manual that reflects the needs of Nunavut's children.

In addition to this work, in parallel, as I mentioned yesterday, Mr. Chairman, we've

 $\Delta$ **º/ペレር¹º** (ጋጎ $\lambda$ በJ<sup>c</sup>):  $^{c}$ d $^{c}$  $_{c}$ Γ' > $\dot{^{c}}$  $^{c}$ .

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just begun work through the partnership committee with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the regional Inuit organizations, through the lens of identifying how can we conduct child welfare work in an Inuit way.

You're right, there's been the application of colonial laws and systems imposed on Nunavummiut for far too long, and I've said early on in my career legal aid, and I hope I'm not speaking out of turn, but every law in Nunavut should reflect Nunavummiut. A lot of the laws that we're operating are coming from 1988; Alberta, Northwest Territories, even older, built on very colonial approaches to the way that the law is written and the way that services are discharged to communities.

As my part, in terms of recognizing that it's been far too long that this is a reality in Nunavut, it will be really important that not only the standards and procedures manual accurately reflect an Inuit-led response, but that the legislative overhauls that we discussed yesterday, including the *Aboriginal Custom Adoption Act* and the *Adoption Act*, both bring into its framework Inuit ways of living and knowing.

I think that is paramount in terms of realizing Nunavut as it was originally envisioned, from my perspective, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): I forgot to turn off my microphone. I apologize. I also thank you for your response, as it is understandable. Actually, this aspect of Inuit cultural practices are here in the north, throughout the arctic regions, and actually the many places Inuit have migrated to today.

This show of Inuit culture obviously has their

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distractors, and I have perceived in the past which I have also personally experienced, people being treated as undesirable, unintelligent, unable, incapable, not civilized enough, not good enough, and there are many other examples and endless examples that could be described.

These racist opinions are the reason I'm asking you about this, as people who are incarcerated or taken into custody, must follow the rules set by colonial governments, with no flexibility allowed within these workplaces. These practices are alien to most Inuit. However, I note many capable Inuit who work within these rules by accepting these rules.

When a foster child is apprehended, then the applicable rules and protocols must be followed, to cite an example. I am not trying to denigrate this practice; however, I am saying this exists as a systemic barrier that could conceivably provide more tangible benefits if Inuit cultural practices and house rules were perhaps applied to younger children especially, and youth who are sent to out-of-territory.

I feel more children could remain in their home communities since this is of primary importance. I am just commenting on that. It's not a question, so I will stop there, and I thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Killiktee. Just to follow up on Ms. Killiktee's line of questioning, I know the Deputy Minister has committed to providing information on the criteria for foster homes, but I'm just wondering if the department would also be able to add if there is any flexibility.

I look at our housing policy, as an example. If you have two children of the same sex

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within five years of age, they can share a bedroom. Are those same parameters or considerations made with foster family placements, for one, and secondly; are there exceptions or exemptions that could be achieved in a case like Ms. Killiktee brought forward, where somebody may not have all the room that is needed, but can still provide a safe place for that child? Can I get that commitment from Mr. Ellsworth to include that in the response as well?

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Mr. Chairman, yes, I commit to getting that information for you.

Chairman: Thank you for that. (interpretation) Are you finished? (interpretation ends) That is the last name I have on my list for paragraphs 26 through 31. Oh, Mr. Simailak has some more. Please proceed.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to jump in again. A thought popped into my head to the Deputy Minister from Family Services' response earlier about dollar figures and trying to keep up with the cost of living to ensure we're not adding undue stress on foster homes.

I'm wondering: how will the department tackle that? Are they going to be following a cost-of-living allowance of some sort? Are they going to be keeping track of food prices coming up here or power rates and whatnot? What is the idea in mind here, just to ensure we are giving the adequate supports to these foster homes? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we're going to need to use a series of different source materials to establish what those guidelines look like. For example, we're studying right now a recent release of

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the Statistics Canada Market Basket Measure that sort of defines what the cost of living looks like in Nunavut for an average household. We're also awaiting the release of the report respecting minimum wage that I understand will be coming at some point. We're also reviewing the contents of reports that have been commissioned for the purposes of looking at the options with respect to guaranteed basic income. We're going to need to look at a lot of things, Mr. Chairman, and I believe Mr. Onalik would like to supplement my response. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Go ahead, Mr. Onalik.

Mr. Onalik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I think we all know that beyond the specific scope of today, we're seeing pretty large increases in the cost of living and it impacts a lot of our program areas. We're struggling and I hope we will soon have an approach governmentwide of how we deal with recent unprecedented inflation that I think, in many ways, is under-captured. A lot of the Stats Can data comes from Igaluit and Igaluit only, so how do we find measures outside of Igaluit to reflect the true cost of living? I think that's something we're hoping to inform this coming budget. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. (interpretation) Mr. Simailak, are you done? (interpretation ends) We will move on to paragraphs 32 through 37, Out of territory, and one of the main concerns is "Few check-ins on children and youth." Mr. Quqqiaq.

**Mr. Quqqiaq**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, everybody. Good morning, Nunavummiut.

My question is for the Office of the Auditor

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General witnesses. Paragraphs 32 through 37 of the audit report address the out-of-territory placement of children and youth. Was any of the audit conducted outside of Nunavut, in the three jurisdictions where Nunavut children and youth are often placed? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Hon. Member, for the question. Yes, in terms of our audit work, we did meet with client liaison officers who were in the southern jurisdictions of Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta. We looked at files, obviously, of the out-of-territory clients who were placed out of territory. We also had discussions, as was mentioned yesterday, with some of the child protection agencies located in southern jurisdictions just to talk to them about out-of-territory care and things of that nature. We did do some work outside of Nunavut as part of the work in this section of the report. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the same Paragraph 32, it notes that placement of children outside of the territory includes both for foster care and special needs. Did your audit review how many children or youth outside of the territory were in foster care and how many were receiving specialized care? Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you for the question. This was another example where the information from the department did not allow us to come down to accurate and complete numbers. We spoke about 95 children, youth, and young adults, but we don't know whether there might be more who are outside the territory. I'm not able to give you a specific number,

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but the majority of these cases were for specialized care.

I would mention that, as I said earlier, there is a possibility that there are more children and youth and young adults who are in care outside of the territory. There are cases where, for example, they might have been apprehended while visiting one of these provinces and those cases highlight the importance where collaboration between the department and the other jurisdiction is important because if the department collaborates in a timely way, those children might be able to be brought back faster.

Unfortunately I'm not able to give you an exact number, but the majority of the cases where children from Nunavut have been sent to these provinces are for specialized care. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that. Before I go back to Mr. Quqqiaq, we will take a break for lunch, returning at 1:30. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 11:55 and resumed at 13:28

Chairman: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome back to the proceedings of the Office of the Auditor General's Report on Child and Family Services. We left off and we were on paragraphs 32 through 37 with Mr. Quqqiaq who had a line of questioning. You can continue, please.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My questions will be for the Government of Nunavut witnesses. Paragraph 32 of the audit report states that children, youth, and young adults are placed in care outside of the territory when exceptional circumstances warrant it.

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the Director of Family Wellness, it states that "out-of-territory residential care is utilized to access specialized services" when a child or youth has complex medical or behavioural needs that cannot be met in the territory. Are there any other exceptional circumstances in which children and youth may be placed outside of Nunavut for care? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and *unnusakkut*. To respond to your enquiry, my understanding of the reasons why children are placed outside of the territory are in line with your description of what was described in the annual report reference. By and large, they're there for complex and acute medical needs that our territory doesn't provide services in, in-territory.

In addition, as you stated, there are other situations where significant behavioural challenges exist as a result of unresolved underlying trauma-related matters oftentimes is the reason why children are placed out of territory.

Aside from that, at the present time, those are the only reasons why children are placed outside of the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll move on to the Office of the Auditor General. Exhibit 3 of the report depicts the geographic location of children and youth placed outside of Nunavut. Did your audit review the reasons why Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario were the only jurisdictions to have young people from Nunavut in placements receiving care? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you. We did not review the reasons why these jurisdictions were chosen. Our focus was really on whether the department was doing the case reviews. Ultimately, though, I would say that these jurisdictions have a history with supporting the territory. It might be because of contracts or because the relationships that have developed with hospitals or specialized health care providers. We didn't go to that level of detail, though, in our audit work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll move on to the Government of Nunavut. In paragraph 33 of the audit report, it indicates that the department provided auditors with the information that 95 young people were receiving care out of the territory as of March, 2022. The 2021-22 Annual Report of Director of Family Wellness states on page 21 that 73 children and youth were receiving care outside of the territory. What accounts for the discrepancy in information provided with respect to the numbers of young Nunavummiut receiving care outside of the territory? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Quqqiaq. I know Mr. Lightstone had asked some very similar questions that there's just not a lot of trust in the numbers that we're provided in both reports, and the Auditor General's office spoke to some of the discrepancies in those numbers as well. I think, just to move along, Mr. Hayes would just like to provide a brief response to that. Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

**Mr. Hayes**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In addition to the comments we made before,

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there could be another reason as well for this number to be different and that's that the young adults are also included in our number. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Office of the Auditor General, paragraph 36 notes that Family Services did not have policies and requirements for certain aspects of out-of-territory services. It also notes that "the department did not have a process to regularly review when out-of-territory children and youth could be" brought back home. Did your audit review any cases in which children or youth in out-of-territory care were repatriated back to Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you. The focus of our audit was on the check-ins, but we know that 5 of the 23 children and youth were repatriated and we also know that there were children in a particular group home in Alberta that were brought back to Nunavut. I don't have the details about those cases; the department might be in the best position to answer the specifics there. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll move on to the Government of Nunavut. Paragraph 35 of the audit report addresses the obligations for Family Services to conduct site reviews for out-of-territory care provider facilities, in part to address safety and licensing requirements.

In March 2023 the media reported on the placement of eight young Nunavummiut in an unlicensed facility in Alberta. How did

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this happen and what steps have been taken to ensure that it won't happen again? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think, in a nutshell, how this happened is that the department failed in its obligations and diligence review pieces in respect of ensuring that the appropriate licensing and accreditation were held by the group that you're referencing in your question, Sir.

Since that time, additional diligence has been added to the scope of reviewing in terms of the interprovincial placement agreement. Although we haven't placed any kids outside of the territory in the last number of months, the going direction is simply that, again, as I spoke to earlier, enhanced training for the people performing the functions, but enhanced oversight for those functions to ensure that there's accountability at the highest level at the department.

Oftentimes, as I understand it, there was a heavy reliance on frontline personnel to ensure that these functions were being carried out and I'm not confident that that accountability framework lived inside the department to the extent that it should have. It's my considered opinion that this circumstance that you're describing, Sir, is the result of this lack of accountability and oversight procedure inside the department.

To answer your question, what steps have been taken to ensure this will not happen again, first, we're working as diligently as we can to find in-territory placements, as I discussed earlier, either through foster parenting or some of our partners in the not-for-profit sector, and second, only in the event that there are acute medical needs that require a child to be in a care facility in the

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Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll continue to the Government of Nunavut. Inuit client liaison officers are based in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario to provide support to young Nunavummiut in out-of-territory care. How does the department recruit, train, and orient the client liaison officers on their roles and responsibilities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are currently six Inuit client liaison officers who live in southern jurisdictions, five of whom are retained on an indeterminate basis, one of whom is a casual, but we aim to get that person online in an indeterminate role as soon as we can. We recruit them through the regular process of human resources and that's through a competitive process.

Secondly, in terms of training, I believe that it has been clear on the face of this report that we don't do enough to train client liaison officers to ensure that they have adequate tools and resources to discharge their duties in accordance with standards. To address that clear reality, as a part of the strategic plan, we're developing specific training programs for community liaison officers and family resource worker roles. It's scheduled to be delivered this year. It's currently, as I mentioned, in the development phase, but we're trying to move as quickly as we can to

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As an intervening measure, we've had, as I mentioned earlier, additional oversight, additional engagements with the client liaison officers, sharing of information, providing resources and tools to be able to discharge their functions in the southern jurisdictions.

Mr. Chairman, if I might just add, there was a question earlier around why those jurisdictions are chosen. I don't think they're chosen, Sir. Those facilities are usually competitive, operate within the framework of an RFP process, and so they're not chosen *per se* because of historical relationships or otherwise. There are procurement processes that the department operates with in collaboration with the Department of Community and Government Services to ensure that those processes align with government procurement rules and such. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you for that, Mr. Ellsworth. Just before I go back to Mr. Quqqiaq, so these Inuit client liaison officers, are they all of Inuit descent or former Nunavummiut, or are they hired from the south just through the normal competitive process? Thank you.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. They are Inuit who can speak Inuktitut. I can't speak to where their location was at the point of hiring. I can certainly seek to obtain that information if it's the desire of this Committee, but I do know that they are all Inuit and that they can all speak Inuktitut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. That answer is sufficient. Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

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Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. This will be my last question to the Office of the Auditor General. Paragraph 37 of the audit report refers to "a continuum of services care strategy" being developed by the department since 2016. Did your audit review the current status of the strategy and, if so, were you able to provide any input to improve its effectiveness? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Quqqiaq. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you. We have not seen any drafts of the strategy. When our audit was being completed, the department was in the early stages of discussions. This is an example of where there was a long-standing commitment that hadn't been advanced. I'm encouraged by the statements by the department earlier that they will engage with our office in the development of their strategic plan and other documents at this point so that we can provide some assistance in relation to the way that this is being developed and then ultimately implemented. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Hayes. The next name I have on my list: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My questions are for the Department of Family Services. Paragraphs 34 and 35 talk of some of the department's responsibilities for the clients that are out of territory, with reference to quarterly case reviews, monthly check-ins, and annual site reviews. I was wondering if you would elaborate a bit further about what exactly is the responsibility of the Department of Family Services in ensuring the obligations are met of those clients who are out of territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The responsibilities are fundamentally rooted in the Child and Family Services Act and that's our obligation to ensure that children in our care are safe. How we discharge this responsibility prior to my arrival is still something that I question on a routine basis. However, as a result of the findings of the Auditor General, we took immediate steps and through the engagement with our client liaison officers, we had since ensured that every child and youth placed out of territory have been checked-in on, that there's a requirement to have an interprovincial placement agreement whereby it establishes sort of the framework of what that relationship looks like with not only the service provider but also with our sister child and family services delivery agencies, if you will, for courtesy supervision by social workers in concert with the client liaison officers.

Going a little further, and I know this is outside of the scope of your question, but I think it's important to inform the Committee, we have recently re-profiled a position and that's called an interjurisdictional placement specialist. This role will also facilitate oversight and engagement with the client liaison officers and the interjurisdictional bodies that are at play, including the ministries of child services or their various connotations throughout the provincial jurisdictions, and their primary focus will be on ensuring compliance, ensuring that the annual site reviews are done, but done in a way that are meaningful within the care provider facilities, completing quarterly reviews and file reviews to ensure that the files are up to standards, the standards we discussed earlier today, Mr. Chairman, and really offering an extra level of support for the client liaison officers.

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I think it's clear in my view that we haven't done enough to support not only the client liaison officers but all of our wellness staff. We need to do better and there's a cognizant recognition that this has to happen and happen quickly. I feel that we responded, perhaps, not necessarily as quickly as we could have in the sense of checking on everybody. Again, I shared my dismay earlier this morning with the reality of what the department was facing when I arrived, much to my surprise, to be honest, Mr. Chairman.

In addition to what I have just mentioned, we're looking at enhancing our footprint with out-of-territory placements by way of additional human resources, the details of which I can't share at the present time, but I am cognizantly aware that the department did not do enough in terms of making sure that the safety and well-being of the children who are placed out of territory was at a place that was above and exceeds standard. My view is that the standards are there, but it's our duty to make sure that circumstances can be the best that they can be in any situation.

This goes to our sort of quality assurance, one of the overarching narratives in our strategic plan in terms of having those separate checks and balances in the system so that if there are failures in the front or middle levels, there are catches and those catches happen before any children are put in any sort of dangerous situation, if you will. I don't want to use that word because I do have a lot of respect for the care facilities and the care providers in the southern jurisdictions.

Finally, it goes to accountability, right? We need to be accountable to these families. It's not just these kids. These kids have parents. They have aunts. They have anaanatsias. We

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need to make sure that they're safe and that the services they are getting in the southern jurisdictions are proportionate to their needs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I believe Ms. Kownak would like to add something, if you will allow, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Go ahead, Ms. Kownak.

Ms. Kownak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the context of most of the cases, it's case by case. Each child requires a special requirement, whether it's medical or complex therapy, based on their experience. In the case of each situation, we now have a gatekeeping process through the interprovincial specialist, using an agreement with the other jurisdictions, and the ones that are involved, of course, are the child themselves and the families in that context and also the other jurisdiction.

In cases where we cannot support the children, because these are complex, we have to use that vehicle, but at some point, moving forward, Nunavut needs to consider having foster families that can support these medically challenged children. Maybe this is something we also could discuss in the future and consider so foster families in Nunavut could support them. Also, in the communities, we need to start looking at building local capacity in terms of therapy, in terms of addictions and other issues around the child's situation. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that. Mr. Lightstone.

**Mr. Lightstone**: Thank you for your responses. There are still a lot of questions surrounding children who are in care out of territory. I'm glad that there was mention of the Inuit client liaison officers in the southern

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I was curious if there had been any consideration or discussions around utilizing or the Department of Family Services partnering with the southern urban Inuit organizations, for example, Tungasuvvingat Inuit in Ottawa. There's also one in Toronto. There's another one in Winnipeg. I'm assuming those are the cities where the Department of Family Services utilizes facilities.

I know that many of those southern urban Inuit associations, I mean, their roles are to provide assistance and services to Inuit in the cities that they preside over. I believe, if I recall correctly, that some urban Inuit associations even have social workers on staff, so that is why I was curious if there have been any discussions or consideration for the Department of Family Services to partner with these urban Inuit associations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's my position that there haven't been formal discussions, but having had the opportunity to collaborate on a personal level with some of our care facilities when I was in the south not too long ago, I understand that they do engage with the Tungasuvvingat Inuit organization in the Ottawa area.

I can't confirm, but I expect that moving forward, the cultural programming piece of our work is of the highest significance in terms of making sure that that identity is not lost while we're trying to protect our best

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Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

**Mr. Lightstone**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you again for the response. I really do hope that collaboration with southern urban Inuit associations is included in the strategy.

Another issue that has been raised in the past and it's still unclear is when children are sent out of territory for their complex medical or behavioural needs, it's unclear how often they are actually repatriated. I mean, aside from the eight children brought back from Alberta, I don't think I recall hearing any specific instances or circumstances surrounding those instances where these children have been brought back in-territory. I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about that; does it happen, how often, and so on.

The other issue, grey area around children in care out of territory, is what happens to them once they age out. Are they still clients of the Department of Family Services? If not, are they passed on to the provinces that they reside in for continued care? Those are my two questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be asking my colleague, Ms. Hunt, to assist me in this response, but preliminarily, as my colleague just mentioned, each child is there on a case-by-case basis. From a

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medical perspective, if their doctor gives them clearance to return home and if Nunavut has the services available to them or needed by them, then of course we would repatriate, I think is the word you used, Sir, bring them back and try to reincorporate them with their families.

To your second point around aging out, if their acute medical needs remain during the aging-out process, I think that's when our colleagues at Health begin to engage some of their processes. I know, for example, that if it's a capacity issue around their ability to make decisions on their own and oftentimes the Office of the Public Guardian is engaged through that legislation to get an order in place so that there is legal status to continue caring for that individual in a care facility.

Mr. Chairman, if I might, Ms. Hunt may have additional comments. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Hunt.

**Ms. Hunt**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If you will allow, I'll pass this on to ADM Victoria Madsen.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Madsen.

Ms. Madsen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's true; sometimes there would be a client that Family Services has been looking after out of territory for some time. When the person no longer meets the criteria for Family Services, Mental Health and Addictions sometimes will take the case over because we have a number of people out of territory that aren't able to look after themselves in-territory. We don't have the resources. It's already a group that we're overseeing and in those instances when we discuss it with Family Services, we look at what's the best situation for that person who has now become too old for Family Services' service. Thank you, Mr.

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Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Madsen, for your response. It's very interesting. That was something I was unaware of. I did not know that children who age-out out of territory are then transferred, in certain cases, to Mental Health as Department of Health clients. This is an issue of significance. It's still unclear. We have a number of children who are out of territory now, whether it's 73 or 95, but the question still remains: once these children are sent out of Nunavut, do they ever come back? How many children have been sent out since 1999? How many of them are still out of territory? This is something that I think is a real issue. If you don't have that information, I would like to request that that information be provided to the Committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's a question that keeps on coming up in my mind, Mr. Lightstone, and a piece of my critical review of the Department of Family Services when I was at legal aid still. I would say anecdotally that any number we come up with is going to be quite questionable and so I can commit to getting you the best number that I can, but based on the findings of the Auditor General, I'm not confident that those numbers would be accurate. I think we need to do more in terms of finding out where those inaccuracies are and identifying ways to locate and engage with individuals who may have found themselves in a situation like you described.

I would hate to think, from a professional perspective, that any child is forgotten or

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aged out of the system and then left to their own devices in foreign, southern jurisdictions. That to me is unacceptable, Mr. Chairman, and so I know that moving forward, that reality is not going to be a reality for the Department of Family Services, but I do recognize that it's incumbent on us to discharge a diligence review of which children have been sent south and to confirm what their status is and again, engage with them to ensure that if they want to come home, we will make sure that we can help you do that.

I think we are all aware that the number of urban Inuit is on the rise and I fear that this is a reflection of some of the challenges that this government has faced over time in terms of sending people to the south for services and losing touch with them, perhaps as a result of policies that are based in a very colonial approach to service delivery.

Mr. Chairman, I know I have been a little long-winded with this, but it does touch close to my heart, recognizing that there are likely people out there that are in real need and we're not helping them. Definitely, I'll commit to getting you the best numbers I can for this Committee and as I mentioned, I think the part of this strategy absolutely has to look down that road of introspection and identifying what we can do to better serve Nunavummiut who might have been cast aside for no good reason. There is no good reason. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Mr. Hayes wanted contribute to that response as well too.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you very much. I think this discussion highlights some of the points that we have been raising throughout about the importance of having a clear picture, accurate information, which partially can be solved by information management systems, Δ<sup>56</sup>baΔ><sup>5</sup>δρλίσ<sup>6</sup>.

ϤͰ ΔϲΓϤιἐ·ͻͿ, ʹϧΡλͰϥ·υ ΛϲπϥʹϞͿϥʹͽ ΡͰϤϭ ΡʹΛπϲΠϤʹ·Γ·ͼϷϾ ϷͼͺϷʹ;Ϟʹ·Γϲ CLϧϤϤ ἰ·ͼ Ϥʹͼ·ϷϲϹϷͰͰϤϾ Δϼϲπλϼϲ. ϤϷ;ϽϚϷΠʹϧΠϲͿ·ͼͼ·ͼͰͰϧʹ϶ϲ ϤͰϲʹΠʹ·ϭ·ͼ, ΔʹͼϧͼϪϳϞϼϽϤʹ·Ϳʹͼʹ·ϹͰʹϧϷΓ·ͰϲʹϹϷʹͼ Ϸʹ·ͿϲʹϽʹͼʹͼʹʹ·ϲ ϼͼͺϲʹͼʹϘϷʹ϶σ. ΔʹͼϧͼϪϧπϤϚͰϹϤʹ·ϒͺͼͼ, ΛϧπϤϽϭʹͼʹʹ·Ͻ.

 $C\Delta\dot{L}^{\flat}$   $b\Pi L^{4}C^{\dagger}\sigma^{\flat}$   $\Lambda$ ርሊ $^{\dagger}b\Pi^{\dagger}b\Pi^{\dagger}$   $^{\prime}$   it will partially be solved by sufficient resources, if you have the right training, but I want to use this opportunity to emphasize the points that we have made about the continuum of care.

What that basically means, I'm going to put it in different words; nobody should fall through the cracks at any point in time. When there's a handover, whether it's from a southern jurisdiction back to the Department of Family Services or from the Department of Family Services to the Department of Health, this is where everybody needs to come together, that collaboration, that whole-of-government approach needs to be emphasized.

If I could, Mr. Chairman, I think Mr. McKenzie would like to add something here. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Hayes. Mr. McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just very briefly, in the tie-in to a question that the Member had before lunch, you will note in our report that we did include individuals from the age of 19 to 26 because there is a provision that allows individuals under agreements with the department to continue receiving care, if they're, for example, in a facility in the south. That then raises the question of what happens when they become 27. We didn't look at the question of adults who are not young adults but older adults, I guess.

I just want to clarify the provision in the extended support agreements. When the question was asked of what happens when children age out of the system when they become 19, that option, that provision of an extended support agreement is also available to them if they wish to pursue it. It is an

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option that they can sign an agreement that is renewed on a periodic basis with the department.

However, if it's determined that they can't live independently, then they may, working with, there was mention of, the Office of the Public Guardian that they can look at other arrangements for them. For individuals that can, it is voluntary, but it does allow them, if they wish, to set up an agreement with the department that outlines supports that they may be able to get, like income assistance, help with finishing off high school, for example, or getting into adult education.

There are some alternatives, but again, it only goes up to the age of 26. There is that and it's voluntary at that point, depending on the person's, again, ability to live independently, but again, we didn't look at adults who are over the age of 26, but I just wanted to point out that we did look at it from the perspective of out-of-territory care. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. McKenzie. I appreciate that. The next name I have on my list: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good day. I would like to ask a question that is partially related to my colleague's earlier question concerning Nunavut children and youth who are sent south. Do the service providers get licensed from Nunavut or the governments of other jurisdictions, such as Alberta, Ontario, and Manitoba? Where do the service providers get their licences? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In response to the question, I can advise that case managers remain Department of Family Services' staff. Their work is complemented

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**LCP**: 'dታ° ሲቮ', Δ<sup>6</sup>/ 《PC<sup>6</sup>. Ȱ ሲ \%PM<sup>6</sup>/ \Gamma<sup>6</sup>/ with the work of the client liaison officers, but also supported with clinical social workers from the jurisdiction, so we maintain carriage of the file with resident social workers. We ensure that the standards are met through the use of client liaison officers and again, we're supported by clinical social workers from those receiving jurisdictions to ensure that their adequate social programming is made available to them. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you. (interpretation ends) Does that mean the Nunavut government gives out the licensed care for these Nunavut children down south? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our legislation doesn't provide for an opportunity to license extra-jurisdictional facilities for the purposes of being defined a child care facility. However, I don't believe, in law, it would be an option because there are some jurisdictional issues. We do rely on relevant legislation in those various jurisdictions. For example, I understand that in Ontario, it's called the Residential Care Facilities Act and so that sets out the framework for how service providers can be licensed. There are levels of licences and there are levels of accreditation based on what programs are available within those facilities.

I know it's a long answer and I could have just said no, but we do rely, through the interprovincial placement agreements and our diligent standards, checking on the veracity of their licensing scheme is something that we have been doing regularly.

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ϤͰʹϽͺϹ·Ϲ·ͼϧʹϹͺϟͼ϶ϲʹϷͼʹͶϷʹͺͺͺͼϷϧϧϲϲͺ ϒϹʹͶϤʹͶϤϽϧͼʹͼϧͺϒϼϷϧϹ· ϹϹϹϘͼͶͺϘͺϽ;ϲͰͺͺϤϽͿϧͼϹϲϢ϶ϲ ͺϘϷϧϧϼͼϹϷͿϧͼϧϥϧͺͺ ϒϷϷϧͼϹϷͿϧͼϧϥϧͺͺ Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Next name I have on my list: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, everybody, and welcome back from lunch. Just to begin with, I'm not clear about whether or not every single child who is placed in out-of-territory care has individual care plans. I'm curious about how often they're updated and how they are updated, like who is involved in that or is there parental involvement? Is there any kind of community involvement? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the individual care plans are what I would call a living document. Over the course of our involvement with children. depending on what their care needs are, that document changes and evolves, I would say regularly, based on environmental realities, based on the health and wellness needs of the child, based on the placements, the standards we described earlier today and our initial discussions, and who would be involved in those individual care plans, as I discussed, would be the planning committee. It oftentimes, to your point, would involve parents, it would involve extended family, and it would involve others who had been identified through the course of the engagement that should be a party to those discussions on those decisions for the individual care plans. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Earlier today, Mr. Ellsworth, you mentioned that sometimes children are involved in

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**Δ৽/«ኦር»** (ጋኒት/በህና): 'dታ°ሲቮካ, Γʹር LሮP. ሷ, CL°ሲ ለናረላህσጐሁ 'bኦትL°ጋህ ኦ'bኦ/ሲ'ቴዮርጐ/Lcኦጐሮዎና /ዎታካኒΓካ, Űሲጏጐ ለሮሲላሊታኦረና CLካሪና ላኦርታረበካኒΔና ኦ'dLΔናጋታጐሁ 'bኦትLሁናበካሪና, ርካዕላ Δውሮሲትካሪና ርΔLΔሮ/L«ሶጐጋና, ላ/ጐቦጐታ ላለጥዕበካኒΔና, Γʹር LሮP.

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developing these individual care plans. I wonder at what age and how much autonomy children are given in these care plans. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't scramble, looking through the standards, but I think you make a valid point, Ms. Brewster, in the sense that we recognize that there needs to be some agency on the part of children with respect to their path forward and what their wishes and desires are. There is evolving jurisprudence on that specific point, so I can't give an exact number in terms of while at eight years old, you have a say. I think it really depends on the capacity of the child to recognize their own reality, and I think it's incumbent on the social workers and the planning committees to, of course that child is involved and is the subject of the discussions, but to ensure that where there's a sense of agency and autonomy on the part of the child, if they have the capacity to make those decisions, then of course. I think it's in their best interest to ensure that those views are measured against the clinical work that needs to happen for them. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to talk about that word, "clinical." Just to be 100 percent clear in my understanding, the children that were at the Eventbrite or the Alberta situation were not there because they required medical or clinical care. When you're talking about clinical, can you just clarify what you mean by that, please? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

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Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize. Social workers are clinicians and so from that perspective, Ms. Brewster, it's clinical in the sense of the social work aspect of their needs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for that clarification. If a child who is in care in another jurisdiction runs into issues of concern that bring them under the radar of the local child and family services, I talked a little bit yesterday about maltreatment in foster care and what we know is that the children who are in foster care are, by virtue of being in foster care, at risk regardless of why they're there, whether it's for family issues or medical issues. There are a number of layers to this; one is that agreement with the other jurisdiction. Okay, first off, I'm trying to make sense of this. When children in care are outside of the territory, are they still citizens of Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. By and large, the answer is yes, particularly for those children who remain under the care of our service. They're there and I hate to turn this into a document discussion, but they're there on...like there is a contract, right, and by and large, they are wards of the state, is the legal lingo that comes with that, and their residency statuses are not affected. Thank you.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

**Ms. Brewster**: Okay, just to make it 100 percent clear in my head, so those children who are in care in Ottawa, for example, and they're there beyond three to six months where normally, one would have to let go of

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their Nunavut Health Insurance and gain Ontario Health Insurance program, which do they have? Do they still have Nunavut Health Insurance or are they now under the provincial health insurance program because they're living down there? I ask not to confuse things but it just will make it clearer in my head, I guess, the veracity of your response. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Mr. Chairman, perhaps I can just respond loosely. I don't know that the possession of a health insurance card changes your residency status. I'm not a lawyer, but I'm pretty confident that that is reality.

With respect to the benefits, perhaps I can ask Ms. Hunt to respond to that, if you will allow, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Go ahead, please, Ms. Hunt.

Ms. Hunt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't speak for non-Inuit children, but I will say for Inuit children who are covered under Non-Insured Health Benefits, it would maintain, but I think the Member's question is: are they still considered a Nunavut resident? Correct? Yes and maybe it's something that my colleague needs to go back and look at, but I would probably just bring a thinking to this that in similar circumstances when we think about death and repatriation, the circumstance would be the same, that the child remains a resident of the territory.

**Chairman**: Mr. Hayes first and then Mr. Onalik.

**Ms. Hunt**: I think we might be getting into a level of detail that is confusing. From our perspective, based on the work that we have

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done, when a child or youth or young adult is sent to the south, they still remain the responsibility of the Department of Family Services. That would be our position on this and perhaps the Deputy Minister may wish to comment on that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: I have been biting my tongue through this whole exchange, but Mr. Onalik.

Mr. Onalik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I just wanted to make it very clear that the uncertainty we have as some non-lawyers on this side of the table around making sure at every instance you remain as a technical citizen in Nunavut, it is the position of the Government of Nunavut that anyone under our care is our responsibility. I don't want to make it seem like the hesitation around responding is us trying to say that these kids aren't our responsibility; they are our responsibility. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't get into the reasons why I asked that. However, I will say that in my long-standing experience as a public servant in the Department of Health, I know of many instances where people had to go down south for medical care and slowly lost services that should have been available to them because of the length of their stay down south because of their medical needs. That's why I asked that and I don't want to confuse things anymore.

What I will move on to is the reality that when there is an interjurisdictional placement, we know that there are information and privacy laws that can impede the ability to share information about children in care or Nunavummiut in care. I would like to hear from the Government of

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₽ረላσ ⟨⟨\Pape \\ \Pape navut team how those agreements that are in place ensure that there is that right to information sharing. That's taking into account that sometimes children may come into or under the jurisdiction of a municipal program or service related to issues of concern and not just a provincial service.

Knowing that we have a number of different placements, how are those levels of jurisdiction addressed and what's in place to ensure that the caseworkers who are responsible for those clients are able to access, share, and receive information about those clients. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. I'll go to Mr. Ellsworth and then I'll go to Mr. Hayes.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I mentioned earlier, Nunavut would remain the jurisdiction of responsibility for the children.

With respect to the sharing of information, there are provisions within relevant contracts with the service delivery agencies that sort of set out those frameworks. I can't say that I know them specifically, but I do know that in order to be able to provide a child with the services they need, individuals who are charged with taking care of them have to be able to share that information with service providers.

I think it would be antithetical to the whole reason why they would be there if we weren't able to share information, and so I know that there is information that comes back through those engagements with the courtesy supervision through the client liaison officers and into the social workers. I expect that that information would be shared with family members have a best of interest in the status of those children. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: The only thing I would add is that if there were problems in terms of the sharing of information, it would be something that we would raise in an audit. We would highlight the fact that there might need to be stronger information sharing provisions in the contract, for example.

Mr. McKenzie may have one thing to add here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to provide a little bit of context, so there is a protocol that is in place not just between Nunavut and other provinces but between provinces and territories because there are situations where someone will be transferred from one jurisdiction to another. I would have to check it specifically for any kind of information sharing requirements, but the concept is that if someone's going to be placed, let's say, in Ontario, Manitoba, or Alberta, the receiving jurisdiction is made aware in advance so that they can, for example, check the facility to make sure that it's going to be appropriate to meet the needs of the individual, kind of in advance.

There is, obviously, some sharing of information that's necessary for making those types of decisions, and then, as was mentioned earlier by Deputy Ellsworth, there is the courtesy supervision which essentially allows Nunavut to benefit from the fact that there are agencies in southern jurisdictions that can do that kind of supervision, almost adding capacity to what the department already has. That's how I see that role of the courtesy supervision. It's an added resource, if you will, so the Children's Aid Society and a certain municipality or region could do

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supervision and check-in to make sure that the child or the youth or young adult is doing okay.

There's obviously the need to share information in order for that system to work, for those types of relationships to work, but we didn't see anything that came up that suggested there were any problems, but again, as we noted in the report, there was a lack of evidence, for example, with respect to check-ins and quarterly reviews that would have maybe brought some of that to light, but we didn't see that come out in our reviews. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that, Mr. McKenzie. When we're talking about the Inuk liaison officers and their roles and responsibilities, I was really happy to hear that they speak Inuktitut. I know from experience of being a tropical Inuk for a long time, living down south, that exposure to Inuktitut is imperative as well as the opportunity to have *Inuksiutiit*.

This is a little bit out of the realm of the audit. However, I think it is really important to hear how those Inuk client liaison workers are ensuring that Inuit children who are placed down south are accessing *Inuksiutiit* on a regular basis and not just eating it by themselves, right? If they're the only child there, there is a lot of learning for people who don't eat *quaq* to understand why we eat it and how safe it is and how good it is, and the benefit of eating together is well known for the nutrition status of any person.

Are these Inuit client workers going and spending time just to be Inuk with those kids? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate and fully embrace the importance of *Inuksiutiit* as a way to preserve one's identity. I can't speak specifically to those engagements with regard to the frequency and nature of the *Inuksiutiit* that's being shared, but I can commit to get that information for this Committee, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you for that. I highly recommend that there be some sort of a standard set, if there isn't a standard set, and that means setting a standard that's also based on where these kids are from because we know that everywhere has different *Inuksiutiit* and ensuring that all different kinds are available at the right season as well is really important. I will ask as well, because this is really important to the lives of those children, is how often do they get to come home and do they get to come home to their own community and for how long. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize that I have to say this again. I know that there are efforts to bring children home routinely. I can't speak directly to specific frequency, whether or not they're brought to their home communities and how long they stay. I know that it does happen because I have seen correspondence on it and I'm very happy to commit to this Committee to get you that very detailed information that you're looking for, if you will allow it, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

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Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would also like to know how families are supported when the children are able to come home for visits, and that means how are they supported if the children have medical needs or mobility issues and things like that. It also means how are families supported in order to be able to take part in traditional activities if they are a family who is living in poverty and who do not have access to the means to take their children out on the land, whether it's a cabin, a tent, a quad, a snowmobile, or a boat.

How are these families encouraged and supported in going out as a whole family? I'm not just thinking if you get to go out with your uncle; I'm thinking how good it is for families to be able to get out on the land together and how many families, especially those who are high risk, just do not have the means to do that because it's really expensive to do that. If you could share with us a bit about that, I would appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would tend to agree with your assessment that it is likely that the department doesn't do enough. When you are posing your question, Ms. Brewster, I did have a chance to review my briefing materials and I did not see how the department supports, and mind you, I don't have the whole departmental briefing with me.

I'm sure that we do support families in this sense, but probably not to the extent that we should, and so I'm committed to identifying what we would do to support that kind of activity, and then also looking at ways to expand the way we help individuals achieve an ability to go and enjoy a cultural activity, such as hunting and camping and boating,

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Δα<sup>3</sup>Δ<sup>1</sup>ΛΡ<sup>6</sup>)σ<sup>6</sup> ΔΟCΡ<sup>6</sup>/L<sup>6</sup>/<sup>6</sup><sup>6</sup>Γ<sup>6</sup>ΠΔ<Δ<sup>2</sup>)σ<sup>6</sup>
Δ<sup>6</sup>bαΔ<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub><sup>6</sup>C<sup>6</sup>/<sup>6</sup>)<sup>6</sup>b<sup>1</sup>/<sub>6</sub> Δα<sup>3</sup>/<sub>6</sub>ΓΡΟΡ<sup>6</sup>/<sup>6</sup>Οσ<sup>6</sup>, Ć<sup>6</sup>α
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and all of these. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that, Mr. Ellsworth. From lived experience, I'm thinking of a friend now who lived in Ottawa in the '90s and she went to NS and she had gone to a TB sanitorium. She was from Igloolik. She lost her Inuktitut when she was down there and never fully was able to reintegrate into her community and was always lost, and did relearn Inuktitut. She actually died of AIDS.

What we know is that when children spend a long time away from their families, they become more at risk in the future and that reintegration is so important. What I would also like to know is: how does the department ensure that when children are able to spend time with their families, there is healing happening and there is reconnection? Perhaps that's something that the team from the Department of Health can respond to in terms of if they support those children in any way. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Just to clarify, are you asking that question to the health officials? Go ahead, Ms. Hunt, please.

**Ms. Hunt**: Sorry. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask that our ADM speak to those specific questions. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Madsen.

Ms. Madsen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't think those specific scenarios have been brought to our attention, but some people here have heard me reference our group, the paraprofessional group. To me, that is one of the most important things that the Mental Health and Addictions Program is

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doing, where we're supporting local Nunavut Inuit to be in outreach positions. Another position is the youth outreach worker and we do fund a lot of programs with children. We encourage our outreach workers to do groups with young girls, young boys, usually around traditional skill making. Again, maybe not that particular group, but I do hope that we're reaching them with our plethora of youth programs that we do have going on in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Just before I go on to my next name, I would just like to get a clarification. Earlier it was asked to the Department of Family Services of how many children and youth in care. I think there was a bit of a gap in the question of being how many children and youth have been transferred to the Department of Health or handed off to the Department of Health. Does Health happen to have those numbers? Ms. Hunt.

Ms. Hunt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can ask our team to look at those specific numbers. I don't have that level of detail, but I do know that that transfer in the broader aspect of individuals that we have in those settings is quite small coming from the family services department. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that and we will look forward to that information. Next name I have on my list: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question and I will possibly start with paragraph 33. I wanted to ask about this issue, which was the subject of an earlier question but in seeing actual cases, and in listening to the various comments here along with the Report of the Auditor General, as well as appended reports read earlier in the process as we received the documentation, it was asked about paragraph 33, but I have a

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short supplementary question to add.

In looking at the cases, there is a disconcerting issue related to the decrease in care perhaps due to the overloaded case files of the workers, or due to the turnstile manner of replacement workers but the reasoning is listed there, and the reasoning seems sound.

Nonetheless, I wanted to ask this question specifically related to the parents in the communities who have had their children apprehended or who have turned over parental rights of their children due to their inability to care for them and they request further assistance from the Department of Family Services.

Even in giving up custody, they don't disown their child. They always believe the child will eventually return, as long as they are informed of where the child is, which facility or home the child is placed in, or if it is a youth care facility. This is something parents and grandparents, mothers and fathers want updates on and news about their child, and in hearing the response, it will be heard by the audience.

Are their questions about their child respected when they request information about their child? I am using this example as there are other questions on this. Are their questions taken into consideration when the family requests updates or information on the status of their child, or if they ask when their child might return? Here I am referring to parents who approach your workers to request updates, and are these requests fulfilled? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We need to recognize that in some instances parents aren't kept informed on the status of

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their children for very serious reasons. However, when those reasons don't exist, I understand there is an obligation on the department to ensure that families and parents and extended family members are informed on their status and kept up to date about what is happening with them.

I don't know that this has been happening to the extent that it should be. I can't confirm honestly for you, Ma'am, right now that that happens all of the time. I would like to be able to say that with confidence, but this again goes to our capacity in respect of management of our engagements with clients.

We need to do better, Mr. Chairman. My hope is that there is an expectation on the part for social workers who have carriage of files that they are providing regular updates to parents who are not necessarily having the custody of their kids for various reasons, and moving forward, this information management system will assist us in ensuring that that is happening through oversight and operating to standard. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand that the parents are not updated for various serious reasons. Did I understand that correctly, and that is also to make sure that the people of Nunavut know why in some cases they are not updated on the status of their child? Not all are informed or given an update on their children. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Maybe if you just briefly give some examples of circumstances where the families would not be kept up to date, Mr. Ellsworth.

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Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly did not intend to mean that those who don't get followed up should infer from my comment that they're for very serious reasons. I apologize to you, Ma'am, and to this Committee, and to Nunavummiut. That was not my intention.

Some of the serious reasons that they may not be updated might involve situations where there are allegations of abuse of a physical or a sexual nature in the home where the child is a permanent ward, and that individual might perhaps be incarcerated outside of the jurisdiction. These are the kinds of reasons why parents might not be updated on the status of their children.

In addition, a lot of it depends on how much engagement the parents actually undertake and if they want to be informed. I recognize that sometimes it's difficult to reach out to social workers, but I know as a parent myself, I would go to the end of the earth to find out what is going on with my child if they were ever caught up in a system of government, like child and family services. I know that doesn't reflect the reality of all parents. Some parents struggle with some significant mental health challenges that doesn't give them the ability to do that.

I know that we do have an obligation to update parents, but there is a suite of reasons why we may not, and a part of that goes to the level of engagement that the parent wants to have with our social workers, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you providing those examples and I apologize for that. I wish to move to another matter here specific to my colleague's question, Ms. Brewster, ለነፈበርና ጋየሥቴዮ ወንበነካልና ቴዮ ህወ-Lጢናጋውኑ. የውናበላና ጋላጭ 5ናቴል ላለጭ dበሊናርጭርጐሁ, ልኮ/ペውርጭ? የd৮ዮ ሲኮ ልኮ/ペውርጭ.

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had about the child being sent up for visitation purposes for a brief interlude, for either children in temporary or even permanent care outside of Nunavut. I too, have witnessed brief visits by certain children, usually interspersed to coincide with specific times such as Christmas or if a special event is occurring, and usually this happens during periods of good weather. What I want to know is why this practice is used; obviously one can see the reasoning behind it, and I ought not to even ask why.

Their purpose is related to the protection of the child based on past incidents in their homes and when they arrive at their communities, they are not housed at their parent's homes, but rather at the local hotel with a constant chaperone from that southern institution always present from their (interpretation ends) facilities or youth facilities (interpretation) that is providing care for that child.

What is the actual purpose or pathway...? How to phrase this thought? Are you able to provide support to the parents for them to have unfettered access to their child without supervision? To just be family for a brief period, to eat together or something that banal without the constant supervision required today. This is for time with their families.

Do you have the ability to do this, by providing support to the families to allow this type of interaction or family time as parents to the social workers? Perhaps request a day or two of intimate time perhaps up to a week or so. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the file realities allow for that, then

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absolutely, we do ensure we do have the ability to have access visits with parents that are unsupervised, but by and large, the reason why children are in our care is because there have been situations either in the home, or on the part of one or both parents, or someone else in the home that has caused the child protection concern to be raised at the initial stage.

I mentioned earlier that there is this consistent risk assessment happening, so even when we do plan for access visits, social workers and supervisors engage in a process where they prepare the plan in collaboration with the family, recognizing the initial reasons why the child was taken into their care. They assist in making arrangements for access, or they facilitate access, they confirm visits and document all the visits and cancellations, and again, in some circumstances they have to supervise the access visits due to the nature of the file.

In other circumstances perhaps they don't, and so I think all of which, Mr. Chairman, is that it, it's on a case-by-case basis and each case is unique amongst every other one. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that. Mr. Hayes wanted to contribute as well.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth, just mention the case-by-case basis, which is an important consideration. Although it's not in our audit report, we did hear during the audit about the interest that people have in connecting with their children in maintaining contact. It can be distressing to have your child thousands of miles away in a different province and not knowing when you're going to next see them, not knowing what's happening with them.

Whether it's contact that can happen through

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 $\Delta$ የረፍ (ጋጎትሀገር): የብት ሲቮ . L/C  $\Delta$ ንር አውር ላር.

**Δρ<sup>ε</sup>',>⊲** (Ͻ<sup>'</sup>\,>∩J<sup>c</sup>): Δ΄.

 $\Delta$ 6/40C%:  $\Gamma$ 5/5.

 $\Delta$ 6/40C% ( $\Delta$ 5/40JC): 6d5- $\Delta$ 6. L/C  $\Delta$ 6-49 $\Delta$ 6.

some of the tools that might be available to some now, like Facetime or texts or calls, or maybe some creative options where some family members, community members, might be taken down to the south to visit with these children; whatever can improve the connection with the community, I think is going to promote the preventative and supportive measures that Mr. Ellsworth has been talking about as well. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee: (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for your prompt responses as well. I wish to speak to this matter without fear or apprehension and to use our interpreters whom I use as my voice in speaking my language. I depend on our legislative interpreters. Now we are all emotional human beings, and we can be swayed by passionate words, or powerful statements can make us feel slighted.

We don't want to spend all this time expounding on these issues as a Member of these Standing Committees but sometimes there is no other way, and we have sworn to uphold our legislative duties and thusly, we must persevere. I have a question related to this matter raised in this report based on my own experiences and observations. When looking at staff members, there are six listed here as based in southern locations or offices with Inuit employees in the south.

My question I wish to query you on, in this day and age, although these employees are Inuit, due to losing their language or in no longer receiving appropriate linguistic education within schools has led many youths to lose Inuktitut actually from quite a way back today.

Now, in stating that you have Inuit

፭፡•P°∩ሲ⊲•b°σና°∩J ⊲ᡃL\_°CP° ⊲Γረ∪ċ\_ጋ°σ• ⊲ረሃት 9°ጋ⊲•b∩ሶ°ጋ∆°à...; 1°ጋ⊲•b∩ሶ°ጋ∆°à...;

 $\Delta$ **⁰/ペレርና⁰** (ጋኒ\ዖበЈና): ናሪታ° $\Delta$ 广⁰.  $\Gamma$ ኒ  $\gt$  $\dot{\Gamma}$ ኒን.

employees, as per your response, you stated there are six employees. Does this entail the need for their usage of an interpreter due to their inability to speak in Inuktitut? What I can foresee, which I have observed previously in our communities, including my constituency communities, is the dependence on English.

Even as a young person, some Inuit also require interpreters due to their own lack of fluency in English as they use primarily Inuktitut daily even as young people. Even some youthful Inuit are incapable of verbalizing their thoughts in English, hence needing help.

Now, with respect to your employees although their parents may be Inuit, there are quite a few young people that I have seen, and I will finish my thought here. I am not saying I dislike this scenario, as I do not want to be misunderstood in this aspect.

Nonetheless, we must truthfully bare all factors related to a matter when seeking solutions.

We are exploring new solutions and ways to prepare our landing spots and in this search for solutions, although speaking truthfully may seem adversarial and belittling, it is not made in that spirit of being demeaning. However, what I want to hear about these six Inuit employees in the south is whether they are fluent in Inuktitut.

If they are not bilingual, then it impacts our children and youth being sent down from our constituencies and these are the children of our constituents sent to other institutions throughout Canada. This applies to those apprehended and forsaken children and to ensure their protection.

When children are incapable of speaking or understanding English, even with Inuit

**Δ৬/«ኦር**% (ጋጎ,ኑበJና): የ<mark></mark>Ძ৮°ഫൎ୮. ୮՝ >੨៉ን.ጋ. ዮህናርኦርናፒቲ% ୮ነር የb᠘ናσ%.

**'bΔ'σ'**\* (ϽʹϞϒΛͿʹ): 'dታ°αΓ΄\* Δ<sup>6</sup>/4°.

ΛΓϤʹ\*Θ΄ Δ΄\*Ο Λ΄\*Ο Λ΄\*Ο Λ΄\*Ο Γ΄\* Θ ΡΔͿʹΓ° Θ΄\*Ο Ε΄-Γ΄\*/ Ε΄-Γ΄\*Ο Γ΄\*Ο Γ΄ Ρσ\*Θ Ε΄-Γ΄ Ε΄-Γ΄ Α΄-Γ΄ Α΄-Γ΄ Θ ΑΓ/Β΄ Ε΄-Γ΄ Α΄-Γ΄ Α΄-Γ΄ Α΄-Γ΄ Α΄-Γ΄ Ε΄-Γ΄  $\Delta$ ቀ/**«**PC% (ጋኒት/በJ%): 'd৮° $\Delta$ ቮ ለአተሀሪያ ተጋር H $\Delta$ P'  $\Delta$ PC H $\Delta$ PC H

 $\Delta$ **▷/<PCና** ( $\dot{\Box}$ \ANJና): ናdን° $\dot{\Box}$ ኮ. Γ'C ናb $\Delta$ ና $\dot{\Box}$ ና.

 $ACP \stackrel{}{}_{}^{\prime} \Gamma_{\rho}$ 

employees, they may require the services of an interpreter and the (interpretation ends) status of an Inuk (interpretation) if documented, should include whether they are fluent in Inuktitut. When they are unilingual, then more problems and barriers crop up.

(interpretation ends) There is still a problem that needs to be resolved. (interpretation) This is what we run into when English is the working language, with the emphasis only on the Inuit status, which I first felt positive about in perusing it for the first time and it made me happy.

However, in going through this process and in looking at the issues (interpretation ends) each day (interpretation) more questions arose in my mind on this matter. I wanted to know if these newly hired Inuit workers are fluent in Inuktitut or if they are partially able to speak and understand Inuktitut? If any that is, so I would like to see language assessment evaluations.

To use our employees here, as an example in the north, when a person works, they can qualify for a language bonus if they pass a language assessment evaluation, and it can result in a bilingual bonus if they are fully fluent in Inuktitut. In English it is called a (interpretation ends) bilingual bonus (interpretation) and I feel it should apply here.

My reasoning is, even if these employees are located in the south.... I now want to turn to this question. Is their salary based on southern expenses or the cost of living? I have no idea what legislation applies in terms of southern employment. Are their salaries based on Nunavut wages such as northern allowances? It is due to my ignorance that I am asking.

Are they being paid by the government here?

'ቴታዶኒታ' ተለፈውር ር የቀላ ለርሲል የኦርኦ ሲጋል  $^{6}$  አስር ላይ የተለፈው የተለ

**Δν/«▷C'•** (Ͻ<sup>ϳ</sup>\ $^$ L):  $^{}$ d $^{}$ Φ $^{}$ Γ', Γ'C  $^{}$ Δ $^{}$ C' $^{}$  $^{}$ Θ'.

**Δρ<sup>\*</sup>'><!** (Ͻʹi, - Π)ς): 'dϧͼα ϊͼ Δͼγͼρςͼ Ϥͼμα Γ΄ς 'δΔͼσͼ 'dϧͼα ϊͼϧα. Ρϲσͼ Λγηος τος 'δρλμͼς Γςος Ριζε Λγηος τος Δάκας Ρας Γείς. CΔεσα Δςς Λγηδες απαλρως Ερκας Αγας Διας Πηθοπος Ροκας Του Ρωσους. 'σμας Δεγερςως.

**Δ<sup>6</sup>/«ΡC<sup>6</sup>** (Ͻ<sup>1</sup>, 2Π><sup>6</sup>): Δ΄, Δ<sup>1</sup>L<sub>2</sub>

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The question I have is: are the benefits included if they're bilingual in Inuktitut and if they're able to read and write Inuktitut? These are multiple questions, so I'll end here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. It was mentioned from Mr. Ellsworth earlier that the six Inuit liaison officers do speak Inuktitut to the level of their language bonus structure and compensation. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have to admit my hearing is failing and I was listening to the Inuktitut, but I did get the question from Ms. Killiktee.

Essentially, I really appreciate the fact that just because you can speak Inuktitut doesn't mean you can speak it in a way that responds to peoples' needs. Having worked at legal aid for many years, often times we put folks in places through the lens of them interpreting some very specific legal concept and I think we did of disservice to a lot of people by doing that, and I know that there is a certification process for interpreters and translators that happens at the Arctic College and in other spaces in Nunavut.

I want to say that in order for our client liaison officers to get their bilingual bonus, there is a testing phase that happens with IUT through collaboration with the Human Resources department. Their jobs are Government of Nunavut jobs. They were evaluated by job evaluation and others and the only difference being, Ms. Killiktee, is that they don't get allowances that are relevant to Nunavut like housing allowance, like northern allowance, like these kinds of things, but they are based on our pay scales. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. The last name I have on my list for this section: Ms. Nutarak.

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Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is directed to the Government of Nunavut. Within paragraph 33, it states here that there are 95 youth situated outside of Nunavut. My first question is: are these children under the care of foster parents or are the youth in (interpretation ends) facilities?

Are the service providers receiving any cultural lessons or orientation manuals, such as (interpretation ends) cultural orientation? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't confirm with honesty that that happens. I think it's an important component of any contractual relationship with service providers that they do have not only cultural awareness, but cultural competency, and so I commit, Mr. Chairman, if you'll allow for me to identify whether or not the department engages and to provide that information to the member and this Committee as soon as possible, please, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. Due to the critical importance of this, to turn to the issue of temporary counsellors that travel as well as transient social workers, I believe it is required that they receive cultural orientation due to its importance.

Another question I have relates to children who are sent south. I believe they experience culture shock, as the southern culture is completely different from our own and this is (interpretation ends) culture shock, (interpretation) which I imagine they undergo. Are they receiving the proper

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(interpretation ends) support? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree. I grew up in Nunavut and I went away for two years of school and that was an immense shock and that was on good terms, so I can appreciate how shocking that can be, and I'm a *qallunaaq*. I do appreciate there are other nuances attached to disconnection with family and culture, *Inuksiutiit*, and other things.

However, to answer your question, I think this is part of that fundamental role of the client liaison officer to play that support, particularly on the initiation of their arrival in the south. Of course, that is supported by not only the social worker that has carriage of the file, but also our colleagues in the care agencies as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Ms. Nutarak.

**Ms. Nutarak** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. When it comes to names, they immediately flee my mind.

My last question for the government relates to the children sent to southern institutions, regardless of the social worker or the mental health worker advice. Are these children seen by mental health professionals? Do they receive further support when they arrive south?

I wonder if they receive further assistance upon arrival south. I imagine it would be shocking to the youth leaving your family behind, so I ask if they are seen by a mental health worker. I would like a response, and this will be my last question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the clinical nature of social work would dictate that there are services being made available to young children to ensure their wellbeing during what is a very traumatizing time for them and their whole family. I think there is room for us to look at ways as we develop the standards that I described earlier to Ms. Killiktee in the sense that they need to be developed through the Inuit lens by recognizing the very nuanced nature of the Inuit culture.

Again, I sit here as someone who has lived here, but I too do not purport to know what's best in the sense of developing these standards and so I do look forward to getting advice and incorporating the advice of Inuit cultural knowledge holders and elders to ensure that...because mental health response in southern society isn't necessarily the response that Nunavummiut need. It's a very specific history that we have in Nunavut and so we need to be careful and clear about how that looks.

Ms. Nutarak, thank you for your question and I think, moving forward, that's the approach that we're going to take is to ensure that not only the standards are built on Inuit societal values and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, but also that the approach and program delivery as well as in the mental health field is grounded in those roots. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Before I go on to the next section, paragraphs 38 through 59, I would just like to ask Committee Members and witnesses to.... As we do have a few sections, the next one covers 21 pages, so that's a number of different topics. I will ask Members to get to your question concisely

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and for witnesses to please respond directly to the question.

Before we do that, we will take a 10-minute break. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 15:01 and resumed at 15:17

Chairman: Thank you. Welcome back everyone. Like I had mentioned before the break, we are on paragraphs 38 through 59. Again, just recognizing the clock, I'll ask Members to try and get to your question as quickly as possible and for witnesses responding; get to the point. I understand there is so much knowledge, and I really appreciate the interactions that have gone on, but I do want to get to the end of the report before the end of the day. The first name I have on my list is Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This question will be directed to the Auditor General. Pages 11 to 16 of the audit report addresses a number of intertwined root causes of Family Services not being able to meet its responsibilities. One of the last lines of paragraph 38, on page 12, notes that these root causes will need to be addressed through interdepartmental collaboration. (interpretation ends) If you were to return to conduct another follow up of child and family services in Nunavut, what specific aspects of interdepartmental collaboration would you seek to review? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you very much. We would expect to review and see extensive collaboration. I'll lay out some of that that we would look for: obviously collaboration at the local, regional, and territorial levels. We would want to see collaboration on

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clients who are both in the territory and outside of the territory. We've talked earlier about the medical specialized care and the child protection angles. We would want to see the collaboration on both of those sides, obviously the collaboration amongst the departments in the territory, which I covered yesterday a little bit in my opening statement, but the whole-of-government approach where each department is supporting each other. It has been encouraging to hear from each of the Deputy Ministers that they are committed to that. The regional Inuit organizations; we would want to see collaboration with them. Southern protection agencies, I think that connects a little bit with the point I made earlier about children who are out-of-territory.

Yesterday, Ms. Cotnoir mentioned many organizations that we consulted as we were planning this audit. We would expect that the department engages with those organizations. Finally, I think that it is important to emphasize some of the points that have been made by the Members of this Committee; in particular, the importance of communities and elders. I think we would want to see how the department has collaborated with communities and elders throughout the territory. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Malliki.

**Mr. Malliki** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for your response. I will be directing this question to the government on paragraph 38. I'll ask my question in English.

(interpretation ends) The last line of paragraph 38 notes that the root causes of Family Services not being able to meet its responsibilities will require the government to oversee a whole-of-government approach.  $4^{\circ}\Delta e^{\downarrow}L^{\circ}CL^{\flat}da^{\bullet}U^{\circ}\Delta^{5}ba\Delta^{5}D\sigma^{\bullet}.$ 

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On May 30, 2023, the Premier of Nunavut issued a press release stating: "Taking a whole-of-government approach, EIA [Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs] will provide oversight across departments for services related to the wellbeing of children, youth and families." To date, has EIA initiated its oversight activities in working with your department in this area of service delivery? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I could defer to my colleague, Mr. Onalik, please, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. I think the purpose of the question, and the Member is directing it to Family Services, is asking: to date has EIA initiated any oversight activities in working with your department in this area of service deliver. Maybe Mr. Onalik can supplement your response, but I would like to get a response from the Deputy Minister of Family Services.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can advise that we have regular engagements with the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs through the lens of identifying some of the practical barriers that exist just as a result of the several structures that live within our government and some of the bureaucracies and processes. So EIA has been instrumental in working with our colleagues not only in that department and in our department, but also across departments to ensure that there is a whole-of-government approach being undertaken. I think it is an important oversight role for that department to play. In addition, the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs has been instrumental in organizing the development and initial meetings around the

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We made reference the Child Welfare Partnership Committee, but if I'm not mistaken, I believe there are seven or eight of them, and EIA has taken the lead. This is an even broader whole-of-government approach, I think, that shows there has been oversight and leadership from that department. Those are my submissions, Sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Mr. Onalik, I'm sure you have the more... because there are other departments that you guys are helping them to find guidance on, so that is why I wanted to go second. Thank you.

Mr. Onalik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you to my colleague for the answer there. I think from the moment of that release and in the lead up to that release, my department was tasked with working with Family Services as the Deputy said.

I want to make it clear that we are not necessarily talking about a formal structure of oversight. We have existing processes for budgeting, business planning, and through the Deputy Minister, committee meetings. We've tried to take an approach of not being in our ivory tower over there and give direction, but recognizing that every department, and especially Family Services, has an extremely difficult job, so anything we can do to help facilitate conversations with other departments.

I think some of the early work that happened around the Nunavut Housing Corporation, as an example, where we were able to set up a table and have a discussion about this report. Recognizing some of the barriers, we realized that the opportunity existed to convert previously allocated modular

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housing units to Family Services for either their programming or staff needs in order to respond. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that response, Mr. Onalik. Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question for the Auditor General regarding the annual budget figures of the Department of Family Services. Did your audit review whether these budgets were adequate for the department to deliver services related to child and youth protection? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you. We reviewed the numbers since 2018 and 2019. We noted that in some of the years, the budgeted amount compared to the actual spending amount was relatively close. In one year, the department spent more than was actually budgeted. What these numbers tell us is that the department needs to do a capacity assessment. They need to figure out what a proper resourcing level will be for the department and present that information to the Legislative Assembly, which I believe is coming.

When we think about resources, it's easy to think about the staff. It's easy to think about the positions and, in particular, the vacant positions, but we shouldn't lose sight of the importance of investing in training. That costs money and it involves people that have to deliver that training. Office space costs, which we've also identified is one of the root causes, and I would use this opportunity to signal that the Department of Human Resources might also need to be looking at how their resources and vacant position resourcing needs, need to be addressed in order to support not just the Department of

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Family Services, but all the other departments of the Government of Nunavut as they are trying to address staffing and resource challenges.

I hesitate to come out and say that the department is under-resourced at this point. I think that's for the department to justify, but the root causes that we've identified do raise questions about the budget. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Hayes. I'm actually very glad the way you worded that response. It's something that I think a number of us have been saying in this Chamber for years, is we don't really truly even know what our staffing needs are because the positions that are there aren't even staffed. People are continuously putting out fires.

I'd mentioned to Ms. Cronin, off camera, the other day "we need HR, Human Resources to be fully staffed so that they can provide the central services across the whole civil service." I echo your words and I understand you want to add a little bit more. Maybe I shouldn't have opened my mouth, but go ahead please, Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Just the way that you said that made me think that I should share a bit of experience from our own office. We received additional funding after years of asking for additional funding. We received that funding in 2021 and we had to come to the realization that, although it was uncomfortable, we needed, and we wanted to hire auditors and all of that stuff. We needed to actually hire in our Human Resources department first, because those were the people that would be staffing the positions that we needed to staff for our audit practices.

It felt strange to do it that way, but we

invested in our human resources capacity and our procurement capacity. That was another area that we had to do some upfront investment in, in order to see the benefits down the road. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Hayes. Mr. Malliki.

**Mr. Malliki** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps you also asked part of my question.

(interpretation ends) Paragraph 41 notes that Family Services submitted a number of business cases and gained a net of 9 family wellness positions. Did your audit review how the number of family wellness positions determines the level of service being provided to children, youth and families in need of protection and support? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The way I would answer that question is to say that we saw gaps in a number of areas, whether it was training, tools for frontline staff to manage information, gaps in staff housing, and office space. Those certainly all contributed to levels of service, but also, we did see that the capacity within the department given the demands that are placed on community social services workers and others in the community, such as family resource workers, for example, clerk interpreters; that had an impact and we've identified as a root cause in terms of the ability to provide services within communities and for people who are out-ofterritory.

I would maybe make a link back to our discussion earlier about the workload analysis and the importance of doing that type of work to see what is reasonable for individuals to ensure that that there are enough staff to meet the demands being placed on the department. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Malliki.

**Mr. Malliki** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for the clear responses. I'd like to pose my next question to the government witnesses.

Paragraph 41 of the audit report notes that the department submitted a number of business cases and eventually gained 9 new family wellness positions. (interpretation ends) Did the department submit any other business cases that were not approved and, if so, what was requested in those proposals? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did not come equipped with that information. I can certainly locate to identify what funding requests were made prior to the release of the Auditor General's report and provide that information, presuming I'm allowed to. I'm not sure about the rules around privilege of that stuff, but if I can, I will definitely share that information. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. I can't imagine there would be any privacy issues. They were just business cases that were forwarded and whether there are approved or not, that was up to the decision of FNB. Mr. Malliki.

**Mr. Malliki** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will be expecting to see that. (interpretation ends) Paragraph 41 notes that only 4 of the 9 new positions in the family wellness division were filled by May 2022.

Have the remaining 5 positions been filled in the past year, and if not, what is preventing them from being filled? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: A brief indulgence, Mr. Chairman, while I try to locate this information.

Mr. Chairman, I do have a report that shows the number of total positions and a number of vacant positions, but it doesn't get to the detail that the Member is asking with respect to the family wellness resource workers. I apologize for having to ask for another indulgence to report back to this Committee, but I'm committed to do doing so, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Malliki.

**Mr. Malliki** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So I'll be expecting some answers to my questions because I'd really like to see if the positions have been filled. Positions have to be filled because they were created to help Nunavut.

(interpretation ends) Paragraph 22 of the audit report provides an overview of the current staffing status in the family wellness division and indicates that 56 percent of community social services workers are in short-term contract positions and only 14 out of 47 permanent positions are filled by Inuit. What are some of the biggest barriers to recruiting and employing full-time community social services workers for Nunavut's communities? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There are a lot of barriers. The Office of the Auditor General pointed to two very important ones; and that is access to adequate housing space and access to adequate facility.

I'm going to step back in time a little bit. When the department split from the Department of Health in 2013, I don't believe at the time there was an adequate analysis with respect to what that meant from a staffing perspective, in terms of the housing needs that would be there; the office needs. We discussed earlier the challenges that we have in some communities in terms of integrating service just because we don't have facility to do it. So those two are fundamental barriers to some of the recruitment challenges that the department experiences.

Going forward, or going further, I might also add that generally speaking, I know in the last number of years coming out of the pandemic, staffing has been an issue across, not only the departments of government, but across several industries generally speaking. I know from experience in my previous career it would be very easy to hire lawyers, and right before I left it became really difficult, I think for competing reasons perhaps.

I think analogous is the social worker reality. We are competing in a very competitive market. Social workers are in high demand across the country, across North America, and across the Commonwealth. One of the other pieces to that, I might add, is that I'm not confident that... and I know that there's work being done on this point, but I'm not confident that the pay and remuneration framework that is currently in place for social workers is at a level that makes us competitive. That's taking into consideration not only the work that they do, but the remoteness of the work and the challenges

that come with the work.

What this says to me, Sir, is that we need to do more in terms of building capacity within territory to ensure that there's programs available through the college and through other relationships that will see us over time, I would hope, bringing Inuit social workers who are capable of providing these functions from a clinical perspective who do have degrees.

When we think about some of the successes we've seen with the Bachelor of Education program, with the Bachelor of Laws program that was recently completed, there are parallels there that we can build on to build our Inuit employment framework.

I know I've said a lot, but in my view, the key piece is housing and disconnection from family. The HR process as we all know, has been a matter of great debate in this Assembly with respect to the length of time it takes from when the department sends a job for the job action requests to HR and all of the processes that have to happen, and then there's competing priorities when it comes to the allocation of housing itself. The government doesn't have a huge pool of available housing resources and so then it turns it into a situation where the housing allocation committee, for example, Mr. Chairman, has to then assess priorities. So when were in that pool you think of some of the other priorities like the ones my colleagues have at Health for the -ologists, all the -ologists, the doctors, and the others competing.

Notwithstanding the fact that we've managed to work with the committee to assign priority levels to the social workers, that's probably one of the biggest detractors. The length of time, I know from a personal experience, if I apply for a job, I'm not only applying on

one; I'm probably applying on several, and if there is a duration of time that happens before you get follow-up or before you get an interview, or an offer, I think that in and of itself is one of the factors that contribute to our inability to properly staff our positions. There is probably a much deeper analysis there that we can dive into, but Mr. Chairman, those are my responses.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki: (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for clearly explaining that. I'd like to further add: those who are taking social worker programs or courses at Arctic College, and there are some in Nunavut taking courses, are those people who take social work programs hired as social workers right away when they graduate? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If those individuals want to come and work at Family Services, they are more than welcome to come and work at Family Services, and that doesn't necessarily only mean in the social work context being a frontline employee. Their education and community experience really lends well to other roles that the department needs to fill. When we talk about employment opportunities for people graduating from Arctic College, I think as I mentioned yesterday early in the day, we need to provide pathways and career trajectories for individuals who want to see themselves working, not only in Family Services, but in government generally.

I don't think we've done a great job at making sure that we are breaking down the barriers to getting into the public service, and I know there is a lot of work to be done on that point. There needs to be better support

and better connections. Again, and I'll be brief if I can, the communication strategy seeks to engage a more robust public-facing framework that shows that if you're going to college for social work or otherwise, you can come and work with us, "Here is what the incentives looking like, here is what our benefits packages look like," through the lens of trying to attract Nunavut talent into those roles. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. I'm just going to jump in here for a moment, Mr. Malliki. During our Committee meeting preparing for this hearing, there were a number of Committee Members that brought up personal experience and situations of residents of their communities graduating from the social work program. I know we haven't graduated any through the degree program yet, but there is some anecdotal evidence that those graduates are not successful when applying for positions within Family Services to provide social work services in the community.

I would challenge the Deputy Minister a little bit to go back to officials with Nunavut Arctic College and do some tracking of numbers. I know you're new to the role; I think this is going to be a very good wake-up portion of this hearing that we need to support our graduating students. You guys are contracting Nunavut Arctic College to provide these programs, most likely. It's probably not out of Arctic College core funding, so you need to make sure that you're getting your value for dollar from Nunavut Arctic College that are graduating these students and that you can provide employment opportunities for these students so that we can achieve this goal of having more Nunavummiut providing social services in the territory. I'll leave that as a comment. Mr. Malliki.

**Mr. Malliki** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that explanation and thank you for the response to my question.

We know there are graduates from the social worker programs that were not able to get positions because they are not able enough. I just wanted to highlight that.

(interpretation ends) Paragraph 43 and Exhibit 5 show that many communities went for extended periods without community social services workers. How does Family Services identify children at risk, investigate cases and respond when children need protection without frontline workers in the communities? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are working very diligently to make sure there are social workers in every community, though I do recognize that there are some; I believe five now that still do not have social workers in community; Coral and Naujaat come to mind off the top of my head.

[Mr. Chairman,] we work with our colleagues not only at the health centres and at the RCMP and different service providers to make sure that there are referrals in place so that when there is an indication that a child is in need, we then, if we can't provide the service using technology, then we will send people in to that community to conduct those processes that we discussed earlier today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

**Mr. Malliki** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My constituents were just mentioned. It would be good if these

communities that don't have a social worker got a regular visit from social workers until they get an actual social worker in the community. Can the Deputy Minister tell us if social workers will be visiting the community or when we will get one? Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the question, Sir. I think it's a valid point. There should be visitations even when there is not intervention required. I can commit to making sure that that happens. With respect to the status of the filling of the position, I believe that is one of the positions where there is simply no housing available in the community for them. Or at least, they have been on the housing allocation list for some time. Other positions have taken housing as a priority, [Mr. Chairman.]

Notwithstanding that, however, I recognize that there are potentially other solutions by perhaps working with community members to identify whether or not there are housing options. We can think outside the box and I think that is what we need to do generally when it comes a response to the reality and the findings of the Auditor General.

So Mr. Malliki, if you have contacts in your community that you could put me in touch with, I would be more than happy to explore whatever options might exist through the lens of getting a social worker on the ground for you as soon as we can. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

**Mr. Malliki** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sure there are some vacant units available. There are a lot of vacant Government of Nunavut staff housing units

that are vacant in the communities that I'm representing. I'm not exactly sure where to go from there. I'll move on.

(interpretation ends) Paragraph 44 of the report addresses the need for a workload analysis to determine appropriate workload and caseload standards for community social services workers. The need for such an analysis was addressed under Recommendation 30 of the Auditor General's 2011 report and recommendation 27 of the 2014 follow-up report. What has prevented the department from progressing with this much-needed initiative? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Malliki. I do recognize that this is an important issue and there had been quite a bit of discussion on it earlier and the department is currently working on that caseload management system and identifying what appropriate caseloads are. That was one of the commitments that the department has already made. Do you have another question, Mr. Malliki?

**Mr. Malliki** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I'll move onto the Auditor General of Canada.

In paragraph 45 of your report, you note that [77] percent of the casual community social services workers came from outside of the territory. Did your audit review what supports were provided to orient casual workers to communities, culture, and language of Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Cotnoir.

**Ms. Cotnoir**: Thank you. We learned that there was no specific training to orient casual workers to communities' culture and

language of Nunavut. Through our visits in the communities, we met with casual community social services and through interviews. We met with casual employees that didn't know, after several months in the communities, that there was a manual on standards. Sometimes they didn't know that they could have children placed in the south and that they had to follow-up with them. They didn't know if and how they could interact with the Department of Health. These are key elements that were missing and could have big impacts on the services delivered to children. Thanks.

**Chairman**: Thank you. The next name I have on my list: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My questions are for the Department of Family Services, regarding the staffing findings on page 13. It indicates that staffing vacancy in the Family Wellness Division was at 49 percent. As Mr. Malliki indicated, there were a number of communities that went 23 and 25 months without a social worker over a 41-month period over 50 percent of the time, so recruitment and retention are one of the key issues and challenges facing the Department of Family Services.

The annual report of the director of family wellness indicates on page 5 that "...retention measures alongside recruitment will feature strongly in the coming year" to try to address the vacancy issues. I was wondering if the Deputy Minister would be able to elaborate a bit more on what is currently being considered and what recruitment and retention initiatives may be rolled out in the coming year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I

will do my best to be as brief as possible.

Mr. Chairman, there are a number of things that the department has done since the issuance of that report, as I understand it, most of which has happened in the last three or four months. Some of these initiatives not only include working with our colleagues at HR to break down some of the barriers that exist that result in the backlog of processing of positions going to competition, but there are two other pieces that we have engaged with respect to recruitment.

The Department of Human Resources contracted a contract resource. Their specific role and function are recruiting community social services workers. As I understand it, the uptake has been very positive with respect to the number of applicants and as I stated in one of my earlier responses, we hope to install, if I can use that word, 20 additional social workers throughout the territory before the winter.

The second piece that we're also looking at is, and I know this not something that is sustainable in the long term but at the very least to ensure that we have some degree of presence on the ground in communities, we are working with a professional social work firm to identify whether or not they could play a role in helping us to get people on the ground to provide those services.

However, I'm approaching this one with caution, just recognizing that the four-month contract is not something that has been meaningfully implemented. In order to make sure that social workers who are coming online, either indeterminately or in the short term, are hitting the ground with the capacity to do the job we're asking them to do, that's part of the reason why the strategic response in terms of the training and development pieces that are coming online soon will be an

important piece of not only the recruitment but the retention. I think the Auditor General mentioned that there are some folks that hit the ground not necessarily knowing that there's a standards manual, not knowing where to do file work, not recognizing the capacity or the continuity.

The way I look at this, Mr. Speaker, and I know I said I would be brief, but it's important for the record is I'm looking at it through the lens of the clients. Okay, what does this mean for clients? I think we have all been to the hospital. I mean, I know there are struggles in health as well, but oftentimes I find myself telling my life story over and over and over and I fear that this is the reality for the clients that are using the social work program as well and it shouldn't be that way. That's why not only is it important to have a database and records management system and standards in place, not only is it important to have appropriate onboarding which includes Inuit cultural competence and community knowledge, so it's like the suite of responses to the recruitment and retention challenges that have been articulated within it.

I really look forward to doing the diligence piece in terms of making sure that the steps we're taking are resulting in meaningful outcomes for communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that information. I wish you luck on those new initiatives. On page 7 of the director's annual report, it indicates that the Social Wellness Division received and processed more than 9,300 referrals and supported more than 760 families throughout the year, but it also indicates that the Iqaluit office was the busiest for your social

workers. It actually indicates that 5,730 calls out of the 9,330 calls were here in Iqaluit, representing 60 percent of calls for service.

It also indicates that the "office operations were especially taxed with low staffing level and high intensity operations," and I'm just looking at the public service announcements of the temporary office closure of the Iqaluit Family Wellness office. It is very concerning that our busiest office was so low staffed that it actually had to close.

I have two questions. To determine the caseload for Iqaluit, what is the current complement of positions in the Iqaluit office and how many of those positions are filled? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are 12 positions, 11 of which are filled, I understand.

If I could just speak to your point, I was also concerned that we were at such low staff levels over the course of the summer that we had to reduce services. It's not something that the department should run into. Recognizing, however, at the time there were circumstances that occurred that resulted in that reality and core services continued to be offered, emergency services were being responded to. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With the Iqaluit office being as busy as it is, with those 11 positions handling over 5,000 calls, that's a rough estimate of caseload of 520 per social worker. I think I recall hearing an average caseload to allow the social worker to adequately complete all of their requirements and responsibilities was 14, if I

recall correctly. That is very alarming, if I have that rough estimate of 500 per social worker here in Iqaluit.

Moving on, just looking at the job competitions and I did see that there was one social worker position currently being advertised, and looking at the job ad, its starting salary is \$93,000, which is a pay grade 15. When we require social workers to have a degree in social work, I was just curious: why would that position be rated at a pay grade 15? I was under the assumption that positions that typically required degrees are in the professional category, which pays higher than a pay grade 15. I would like to ask: why is it that social workers are evaluated at a pay grade 15 level? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. I know you touched upon it a little bit earlier, Mr. Ellsworth, but if you wanted to elaborate on the earlier response, go ahead.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you. I just got a flurry of messages about the number I gave you. I was looking at the wrong information at the time and so I apologize, Mr. Chairman. We actually have 24 positions in the Iqaluit office; nine indeterminate social workers, three casuals, three indeterminate supervisors, and one family resource worker indeterminately filled. I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

To your point, Mr. Lightstone, with respect to the evaluation of positions, that's not a function of internal Department of Finance; that's actually a function of Human Resources. I don't know if Ms. Cronin will want to add additional details to what I'm about to tell you, but it's clear on the face why are we paying them at this rate of pay when, in fact, they are degree holders and, like you have correctly pointed out, degree

holders often attract a higher level of remuneration. This is part of the response is that really assessing are we competitive, are we paying social workers a fair value for the very important work that they're doing, and I think, on the face of it, I can say no, we're not.

As I said earlier, this is one of the contributing factors to why we're struggling with recruitment, particularly in an economy where the contract work, you can do the same job and perhaps two or three times the pay and get paid accommodations and get per diems. I think we really need to analyze that reality and come to a place where we're finding a spot to be able to pay our social workers exactly what that work would attract generally and perhaps more so in Nunavut, just given the very unique circumstances that we live and work through. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. I'm sure that argument could be made across a number of professions as well. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the response, understanding that HR is responsible for job evaluation and determining what positions should be graded at or rated, but they do their work with the input provided by the department to determine that pay grade. I definitely recommend that the Department of Family Services reviews the job description and the requirements and make a submission to Job Evaluation to see if those degree-holding positions should be rated at a professional level and receive equivalent compensation.

Moving on, I'm just going to put my last two questions together to save some time here. Earlier this year, Human Resources released the HRM 1410, which is the Labour Market Supplement, to increase the compensation for

positions which are clearly not competitive. When I looked at the website today, Appendix A, which does show the approved positions that are currently receiving this labour market supplement, the only position listed was CGS facility operators, I believe it is.

My first question is: has the Department of Family Services considered or has the Department of Family Services made an application under HRM 1410: Labour Market Supplement to make the salary more competitive and attractive in order to fill these positions?

Secondly, as Family Services is working with Arctic College to provide these social worker programs and given our desperate need for homegrown social workers, has there been any discussions to increase the resources that are funding this program at Arctic College in order to expand the offerings into as many communities as possible, or expedite the delivery of these programs? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Onalik.

Mr. Onalik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I'll answer the first part of that question just to provide Members with an update that we have been directed by cabinet to come back with increased options around the Labour Market Supplement. There are a lot of functions, as it was alluded to, where we're not finding ourselves competitive. Family Services is very much a part of that process and we will be having some conversations here over the coming days, literally, on this.

The second portion on NAC funding, I can defer to my colleague here. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand that our colleagues at NAC are in pursuit of additional dollars to expand the footprint of the social work program. I understand that we're also, through the collaboration with the college, looking at alternative learning methods. For example, we know that the social work program in Cambridge Bay has been successful, but it's a challenge for many Nunavummiut to relocate from community to community, recognizing the supports that they need to be successful in their academic training, and so we're looking at different mediums by which the courses can be delivered, and its early days.

There's a big analysis that has to be undertaken with respect to whether or not we can engage self-paced learning modules that would see individuals be able to study from their home communities. Of course, that would require additional supports of many different variations, but certainly I can advise this Committee that those steps are being taken as a sort of parallel to our very broad and multi-layered strategic plan that we hope to develop and deliver. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. (interpretations) Are you finished? (interpretation ends) The next name I have on my list is Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be quick as well. I think I only have one main thing to bring up. It is regarding staffing, recruitment, and training. Earlier the Chairman mentioned about how in our Committee, a few of us discussed how we keep hearing about Nunavummiut taking courses and not being selected for positions that they're now certified and trained for. It's

very frustrating and they feel very defeated.

I had one constituent go through some of the courses run by Nunavut Arctic College, funded by Family Services, and she applied for the job, wasn't selected and because there was no work in Baker Lake, she left Baker Lake and moved to Winnipeg, because that was the only place where she could find work. A young woman as well, very young, so its frustrating. I just want to quickly put that out there.

What I want to get to next is more of a statement, I guess. The lady to my immediate left, yesterday, used to the term, I wrote it down actually; "We," meaning the government, "do not have the luxury of not having trained specialists." We are now 30 years... how many years into Nunavut? A long time, and we don't have specialists. I don't understand why. I'm wondering: when are we going to see these specialists come up and actually mentor Nunavummiut to get into these positions? When are we going to do that? We are in 2023 now. We keep hearing the same excuse year, after year, after year; "No housing available for the staff members, no housing available, no office available." Here we are 2023; when are we going to see that?

Just a quick question: are we going to have the luxury of having trained specialists coming up here very soon to train Nunavummiut to get into these positions? I'm talking about within a year. Can we do that, at least for one position, one specialist, just to start off? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate your candid commentary, Mr. Simailak. I can undertake to do my best to make sure that this happens, recognizing

that there are many layers involved. I'm not going to sit here and try to make excuses. I share your concerns. I agree, Nunavut has been in existence for many years now and we don't seem to be at a place where we need to be in terms of making sure that Nunavummiut are actually in these jobs, in specialist positions, so I do commit to not only looking at it, but I commit to taking meaningful action on ensuring that we can trained individuals into these positions.

I should though, expand my dialogue just to some extent, recognizing that in reference to the young lady you spoke about, Mr. Simailak, I think it's a significant loss to our territory when young people can't find employment, despite being trained. I think it goes to some extent to these artificial barriers that we have during the screening processes. I know that there are ways to be creative to create pathways and opportunities to move away from these very restrictive screening criteria and move towards screening criteria that will open doors for young people and provide opportunities in the sense of that mentorship that you just discussed, Mr. Simailak. I think that's something that, and I don't want to speak for my colleague at Human Resources, and she might want to add to this, but it is something that we really need to look at particularly, and not necessarily to dilute the required qualifications, but to create pathways to achieve those qualifications while working on the job and getting experience and skills in a parallel kind of way, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure if Ms. Cronin would like to add to that, but I do undertake to do my best to respond to your statement Mr. Simailak. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. I think you summed it up fairly well. I've often been quoted as saying "Look for a reason to say yes. Don't look for an excuse to

say no." (interpretation) Mr. Simailak, are you finished? (interpretation ends) I'll go to the next name on my list: Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Is it working? Can you hear me? Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have questions for our government. The obstacles or barriers that were mentioned, the lack of housing, lack of office space, and lack of staff or recruitment after the COVID pandemic; from my observations here, if I'm mistaken, perhaps Nunavut Arctic College will give us a better briefing.

Social worker courses have been offered in Nunavut over the last 20 years. Last year in 2022; 12 students completed the program and received a diploma, and this year five got their B.Ed, and seven on average complete the program on an annual basis in social work, and these are Nunavut individuals being trained. Still, there are barriers when people apply for social work positions. They're not assuming those jobs. I believe personally that Human Resources is creating that barrier.

There are many individuals who want jobs in Nunavut and they're pursuing jobs, but its often very difficult with the government's Department of Human Resources. They have to have the experience and the training if you want to work at government. Could you look into how Human Resources may rectify the barriers, because were always told, "Get your training so you are able to get a government job," but upon completion of programs, there are barriers and you can't seem to be hired for government jobs, so I think as Human Resources, you have to make changes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Cronin.

Ms. Cronin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I

echo Mr. Ellsworth's comment in that, this is something that we need to turn our heads to, looking at the recruitment process and potentially barriers that are put in place. We can all recognize that some positions have very specific qualifications; nurses and social workers as examples, but there are many positions that do not that I do know the department currently has a process in place where we look at individuals, fairly, based on qualifications, but I still think that there are some invisible barriers. To use, Mr. Ellsworth words, that exists, and I do think as a department, we are committed to dig in deep into these processes for a number of reasons. So your points are very well taken. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Mr. Onalik, do you want to chime in?

**Mr. Onalik** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) On this front, I believe we've tried to be, in the last day and today, very open in our failings, but there's actually been a lot of really good work done over the last six months related to some of these issues. The Department of Human Resources has been tasked and they came back with a new process for direct appointments of Inuit. We've now been able to streamline the back end of that process where it can be done within two weeks now. We can use direct appointments as a tool to recruit people directly out of school. We're not waiting for a competition. We can use that direct appointment process as a tool and as we've seen a really strong uptick over the summer of the number of Inuit who have been direct appointed, that is something we're extremely proud of.

The other piece is we have had a desire, I think to, and in response to many of the concerns brought up in this House about the number of staff housing vacancies, and

we've been directed by Cabinet to look at different approaches to how we allocate staff housing. We've gone from, I don't have the exact numbers in front of me, but it's been consistently in that 300 to 350 range of vacant staff housing units across Nunavut. We are now 140 vacancies today, including, we took since the spring, 50 Inuit who have been on the long-term waitlist have received staff housing.

We want to make the Government of Nunavut more attractive for Inuit to come to, and part of that to me is the signal that we will find housing for those people who want to make a long-term commitment to Nunavut. I'm not going to pretend that it's all fixed, I'm not saying that it's all fixed, but we've had a lot of really focused efforts on the part of HR and one of the reasons we're excited by Kristie's arrival is there are a lot of areas we need to continue to look at because we need to figure out how to staff, and especially make sure that we are fulfilling our promise to those that we are training.

A big part of that is the mechanism from when you finish your training to when you start. If we can use the direct appointment process to bypass a lot of the issues around screening and competitions, I think that's helpful. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that response. We realize people that come from outside of the territory sometimes have not been in the north before.

I have a question for the Department of Health. (interpretation ends) Paragraph 48 of the audit report notes the chronic shortage of frontline health care and mental health and addictions workers. What are some of the biggest barriers to recruiting and employing staff into these positions? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Hunt.

**Ms. Hunt**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the Member for the question. There are a number of factors that we really consider when we look at the challenges to recruiting staff in mental health, but also in other health areas.

One is that, we've talked about our processes around making sure that there is adequate housing, that people are prepared with the tools, and the knowledge. I think about branding of the beauty of this territory, but also recognizing that everybody has different knowledge and skills that are suitable for some places versus others. That branding, as we're going through recruitment, is really important so that people know what they're coming to and they're coming for the right reasons, making sure that we have the available infrastructure to support their work in an effective way, to also be making sure that we are taking a strong position on having a healthy-place workforce. When we did the nursing review, and we heard loud and clear from health wellness professionals, that includes our mental health staff, that we don't always do a good job of creating an environment where staff feel safe, where they feel heard, and where they have the tools and the support to effectively do their jobs.

That is a lot of the work that came out of our critical workforce measures to start looking at those challenges, the voices of health care professionals, and making the changes to the environment, to the training, to their compensation to ensure that we're setting the stage to be able to retain the wonderful folks

that we do have, but also recruit the talent that we need here to be able to offer the services that Nunavummiut deserve. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Hunt. (interpretation ends) Not having consistency of mental health nurses is a big problem, especially if children are being taken away from home, and that is needed. I understand since COVID that the department has not been able to hire more nurses, mental health and health and addiction workers, but are you able to hire Inuit who are trained in basic mental health so that we have consistency of mental health in the offices?

Sometimes communities have no mental health for three months. I think we're almost in crisis in some communities with addictions and we need this help. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Hunt.

Ms. Hunt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You're absolutely right; although we have worked hard over the years to make sure that there are virtual and in-person options for mental health services and for addiction services in terms of being able to provide medication, there is still so much that we need to do.

One of the things that we have done and I think we talked about it is that paraprofessionals in our community and the laddering processes. Our paraprofessionals are so immensely important, though there are community members on the ground that are getting different aspects of training to be able to be trauma informed, to provide cultural programs, to be able to deliver programs that

offer the ability to look at things like depression, anxiety, but through the methods of things like cooking and beading and those kinds of things.

That really is one of the greatest strengths, I think, as you note, that our community members who have those skills as our paraprofessionals really are the ones that uplift and hold, especially during those times where we don't have those mental health nurses or the continuity of those nurses may not always be in place. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Next name I have on my list: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Office of the Auditor General, we talked a lot about information management and we know the importance of maintaining accurate records and collecting and consolidating information about children in care was raised in your office's 2011 audit report and repeated in the 2014 audit report. I'm just wondering if you have anything else to add on this subject related to the 2023 audit and the lack of reliable, accurate and up-to-date information. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you. The Deputy Minister has talked about the information system that's going to be implemented, hopefully, shortly, the Matrix system. This is something I was going to say in my final remarks, but I'll say it now. Each of the root causes that we have identified are interconnected. The one on information management, I'll make two links. First, there needs to be the resources, the staff in place to be able populate that information system with good information. The supervisors, the regional

directors, and senior management, need to use that information system in the right way to make informed decisions. That can't be done if you don't have the staff to be able to do the work and also to be able to document and put these things in the system.

Likewise, training on both the information system and the process, etcetera, needs to be strong in order for the people who are putting this information in to capture what is really important. An information system is a tool. It's not a solution, it's a tool. The solution comes in the way that people use it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Mr. Hayes, for that response. When we consider the collection of information on our children, what we absolutely must keep in mind, is that when these children die, their stories die with them. What we know is that these children are dying, and it falls upon us as family members, as caregivers, to try to piece together their stories in order to tell their children.

This is why this has always been important to me because as I've noted, I do have personal experience with the foster care system and particularly with trying to access information for my foster child while he was a child, because that was really important and would inform the care that I was giving him. It was very difficult not to know this beautiful little child's story. I think he was 8 when he came to live with me and it was, for 20 years, a gap that I was never able to fill. I tried as hard as I could.

When we consider an information system and how important that is, we have to ensure that the categories are nuanced enough to be able to capture information that relates to the children and that it's nuanced enough to be able to describe those people, those children, and their needs and experiences. It has to be informed by other major data sources and we have to ask, "What can I do with the data? What can it tell me? How do I access them, both for public use data sets as well with child-level information that includes child-level information as well as, of course, summary data?"

When we're hearing about this new information system that is being procured, that we approved funding for in 2021, I think it would be a good time to provide that reassurance that this is a system that is going to work both for those who are entitled to their own personal information, as well as for those public servants that are working so hard to serve our children and families and to make informed decisions. I'd like to know from the Department of Family Services: what assurances do you have that this new information system will meet the department's needs, as well as the public's needs? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the reasons why I think, or I understand, we couldn't produce any numbers is because we rushed to implement, I mentioned CIS and I apologize for the acronym; Client Information System, the last one.

We didn't do sufficient user acceptance testing and there wasn't enough work to define what those data sets would look like. I take to heart very personally your comments, Ms. Brewster, and through this process, as you know, there are rigorous data development processes that are undertaken. There are rigorous, what's the SDM...? I'm

forgetting what that acronym is, but the structured decision making to inform the past use of the data, and which users see what information.

I am confident that it will collect the necessary data to not only address our current gaps in that regard, but will also contain information that families can access, I presume, if they wish, but like the Auditor General pointed out, what is really crucial to any data management system is not only the entry of information to it, but the accurate entry of information.

It will be really crucial for us to ensure that the training piece of the implementation of the software solution is really meaningful and in and of itself has an accountability framework because as we know garbage-in equals garbage-out. We need to do much better, and this is a crucial piece of one of the reasons why we are where we are today in this room, Mr. Chairman, and that is that we didn't do a great job at managing peoples' very personal, very personal information. I hope that answers your question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for that response. I know that on paragraph 59, it notes that every community visited during the audit used a different means of managing and storing case file information, and I've brought up this issue in the House a handful of times. We know that in some cases, files have been destroyed or have been stored in sea cans. There's no continuity of storage for people, and I'm wondering whether or not the department will be implementing a new standard file management system. As well, how the department plans to take the existing files that are scattered and that are of mixed

use; how will the department address that, probably, monumental task, also taking into account the Human Resource issues?

However, I think it's really important what we know is that when we are developing data sets and filing information, that what you put into it first is what creates important information. What's the way forward for the Department of Family Services on populating these information systems? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As an integral piece of the implementation of the software solution, there's a necessary data migration that has to happen, so I think we're near conclusion with respect to defining what fields in the current data set will populate what fields in the new data set. To your point, new standards will be developed.

As I mentioned earlier, the standards procedural manual will be developed through the lens and built on Inuit-led solutions, but pieces of it will be around the handling of data and the handling of information. With respect to the paper versions that exist out there, there's a massive undertaking that has to be done by the department and anything that we can locate that looks anything like a client file is going to be loaded and documented. That's a long process.

Speaking to the human resource piece again, we do have plan to enhance our capacity. There will be a budget before the House during the proper business cycle that will speak to those needs.

There needs to be a cognizant, and not only cognizant, but a very intentional and principled structured approach to making

sure that as soon as someone is on the ground, they're not working on any case files until they have the cultural core competency of our core standards of the way to use the data systems, of the way the file management works, the finer nuances are information around the finer nuances of the communities in which they're going to work.

My vision for this is that they're not going on the ground intermingling with the community before they have a cognizant awareness of what their function is in that community and the training that comes along with that, including training on the software solution. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Ellsworth, you just said that this will take time and I was trying to think of whether or not we heard a timeline during the last couple of days, but we've heard a lot so if you could remind me what the timeline is, that would be much appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Right now, the projected implementation date is end of November for this software solution. I think your question is probably a little broader than that. There is a timeline that is going to be associated with the migration, which I understand is it may be done, if not it's very close to being done.

The timeline associated with the upload of the paper documents, that's nothing that I can anticipate at this time, but our strategic plan will have very clear deliverable dates associated with each activity and I hope to be able to define that date and again share that plan in this House for the approval by everyone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Does that plan include really important things like updating standards and procedures for managing this information, at the same time as the roll out is happening so that when it begins there is absolute clarity on what people's roles and responsibilities are in terms of how they are managing information and data. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

**Mr. Ellsworth**: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Related to this, like the discussions over the last couple of days, I think it's really apparent that there's a lot of change happening. I would like to know from the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs whether or not there is an engagement of change management expertise so that every department that is impacted by the incredible amount of change that is going to be happening going forward, is informed by expertise in change management. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Onalik.

Mr. Onalik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I think that's a really good suggestion. I'll be honest, we haven't engaged that. Again, like so much across the Government of Nunavut, we're in constant response mode on this. We're not all crises. I don't want to imply that we're all

crises, but we're rebuilding several departments in many ways. We're looking at a lot of change hitting a lot of departments at the same time and it's all interconnected.

I think we need to find some time and space to pull a little bit out of the emergency mode. I think a lot of that is going to come to hopefully, some ways that this House will consider improving capacity. We need the people who, and this is a broad statement across the government, we need people whose job is only to look at future planning and making the policy process improvements, because right now I think it's a fire in one community impacting service that ties up a whole bunch of resources.

We're constantly in that emergency response mode and the pool keeps getting smaller. Fundamentally, we need the capacity to be able to thoughtfully change and improve some of these systems. Right now, if we make it through the week, and nothing else literally burns down, that's become a bit of a definition of success, and that shouldn't be this way.

We've been asked by Cabinet to look at ways to flesh that out, and I'm looking forward to that conversation over the next few months. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't stress enough how useful a tool that would be. I think that your colleagues in the health field can talk to you about continuous quality improvement and how important it is to be able to implement changes with the expertise of that kind of knowledge. With that, I will say, personally, 'thank you' to everybody who has appeared today. That was my last question. I appreciate all of the work that has been put into this. I appreciate the

questions that came from my colleagues and the clarity of responses that we received. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you for that, Ms. Brewster. Next name I have on my list, Mr. Kaernerk.

Mr. Kaernerk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good evening. Let me start off by pointing out in the appendix here, it says the Office of the Auditor General there. There are a number of recommendations that were listed here. Let's focus on the workforce management here. Has this recommendation been met up to this date? That will be the start of my questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. I think the whole purpose that there weren't recommendations is that the previous ones weren't being met, but Mr. Hayes, please go ahead.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's exactly it. It is unusual that we don't make recommendations in an audit report, and despite the fact that the government's commitments at the time that those recommendations were made in 2011 and 2014 were to make improvements, and I highlighted the words 'in the short term,' we did not see that those recommendations had been implemented. In some plans and other documents, they're shown as having been completed and we did not see the evidence to support that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Kaernerk.

Mr. Kaernerk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 13 of the report, Exhibit 5 on the next page here, and I would like to make a quote on this, Mr. Chairman, "During our audit period, Igloolik had only a single community social services worker for 18

months and had no community social services workers at all for 4 separate months." In stating that, Mr. Chairman, let me focus on the department here.

Looking at the auditor's report for Igloolik, let's focus on Igloolik here. The months without a community social worker were four and the community of Igloolik is one of the larger communities in Nunavut. Why was it listed that it was one of the hardest positions to fill? What constitutes that? I know housing might be one reason. Can the department enlighten me as to why it was so hard to fill this position? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Kaernerk. I don't know the specifics of why Igloolik was a challenge to staff. I'm happy to commit to reviewing that with my colleague, Ms. Cronin, at Human Resources to identify what some of those reasons are. I apologize for not having that information readily available. Mr. Chairman, if you will allow, I will submit a written document confirming some of those reasons if it's acceptable to you, Sir.

Chairman: Thank you. I realize that you already have committed to provide and already have provided a number of different issues that are ongoing. I think we all have concerns with our individual communities, and I think it would not be a useful time of the limited time we have left in this hearing to go through a community-by-community basis on hiring challenges, but if you could provide to the Committee that information regarding that position in Igloolik and of any others of note, I would appreciate it. Mr. Kaernerk.

Mr. Kaernerk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The reason why I said it is that it is listed in the Auditor General's report here. That's why I stated that community and I appreciate that.

Let me move on to the director's annual report with family wellness on the executive summary, Mr. Chairman. With the high vacancy rate in that department there, what appropriate [actions] have been taken in perseverance and assisted innovation, resourcefulness, and all these other topics? What kind of perseverance has the department taken into consideration when it comes to these high-rate vacancies? I don't want to create more time, but I just have three questions and this is the last one that I would like to ask on the perseverance side of how the department is being resourceful when it comes to high rate of staff vacancies. I'll save my other questions on the next section. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we have shown perseverance through the application of outside-of-the-box approaches to recruitment which, as I discussed earlier, included a contract resource specifically retained to recruit social workers and other contract resources to specifically retain short-term social workers where it's appropriate.

Perseverance, in my mind, is you don't keep trying the same thing and expecting a different result. It means that you try different things and hopefully achieve a different result. The important part of perseverance, in my mind, as it relates to what we were discussing today is that we're consistently trying or achieving success in implementing a response to all of these root causes as a whole-of-government. In doing so, it forces us to really look, again, at the

processes that we engage, some of which in my view are processes for the sake of processes, Mr. Chairman. We need to really take a hard look at all of these processes are because of policy and by and large, a lot of these policies are within the realm of our authority to change. Why aren't we looking at it through the lens of realizing efficiency and value for dollar as it pertains to not only recruitment but everything we do as a government, Mr. Chairman?

To the Member's question, we persevere in the sense that we keep attempting to address the issues as they arise in a meaningful way that would seek to get people on the ground in-community, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you. That was the last name I had on my list under that section. We will go to Conclusion, paragraphs 60 and 61. Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question for the Office of the Auditor General under this section. (interpretation ends) In response to your office's 2014 Follow-up Report on Child and Family Services in Nunavut, the Department of Family Services developed its *Quality Protects Action Plan*, with the final and completed plan being tabled in September 2017. To what extent did your current 2023 audit refer to the commitments made in the *Quality Protects Action Plan*? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

**Mr. Hayes**: Thank you. In doing this audit, we based our criteria, and that is what we hold the department to when we do our examinations, on the requirements and standards that are in place now; the commitments that have been made by the government. We did review the *Quality* 

Protects Action Plan and we formulated our criteria and the questions that we asked in the audit on the basis of that plan.

That said, I would note that you can crosswalk that plan. You can link it to the recommendations that we made in 2011 and 2014. As I mentioned earlier, we found that although the department agreed with the recommendations and said in various places that they had been completed, that wasn't the case. That plan was considered, even though it's not mentioned specifically in our report. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for your response. I now have a question for the government officials. (interpretation ends) The report of the Auditor General of Canada on child and family services in Nunavut was tabled on May 30, 2023. The same day, the Minister of Family Services issued a press release which stated, "We are developing a plan with broad objectives and a detailed framework with measurable outcomes." When will the plan and framework be finalized and provided to the Committee? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We hope to finalize it as soon as possible, but recognizing that it would need to be very deliberate in the way it is developed and collaborate not with our interdepartmental colleagues but Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and regional Inuit organizations, communities, and other organizations that were discussed by the Auditor General earlier today. I want to have something to table in the winter session if it's possible. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

**Mr. Malliki** (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We look forward to that because the Department of Family Services now has a huge responsibility and we would like to make sure that it is properly planned.

(interpretation ends) In her press release of May 30, the Minister of Family Services stated that "Family Services is modernizing its Standards and Procedures Manual and will provide staff orientation on the updated manual." When do you anticipate that the updated manual will be ready for use by frontline workers? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I understand it, the performance time frame for the update to the Standards and Procedures Manual is January 30, 2024. There has been some delay with previous resources. The information that I have received just today was just that, but again, this is part of the broader strategic plan. We need to make sure that each piece of the plan dovetails into the other pieces so that there is meaningful overlay and the crosswalk, as the Auditor General referenced, to again ensure that not only is it accountable, measurable, but most importantly, in my view, successful in responding to the findings of the Auditor General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you. In his May 30, 2023 press release in response to the 2023 Report of the Auditor General of Canada on Child and Family Services in Nunavut, the Premier stated:

"With the full support of Cabinet, the government is unlocking the resources necessary to enable the Departments of Family Services, Health, and Human Resources to respond financially and with increased human capacity."

To date, what additional resources have been provided to your department to directly address the issues raised in the Auditor General's report? That's my final question. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Given the timing of the release of the report, many different approaches to the additional resource needs of the department were discussed and it occurred to the group of professionals at the table, including my colleague, Mr. Onalik, and Mr. Chown of the Department of Finance, that we still had a whole year of appropriation in front of us.

The reality, quite frankly, from a practical perspective is you could throw \$200 million at me today and I would not necessarily be able to activate that kind of money responsibly to respond to this. Our approach has been to utilize this in-year appropriation through the lens of careful review. If we need in-year supps or whatever the case might be, then perhaps we may need to go down that road if we deficit. Towards the end of the year we may need to ask for a supplementary after-year appropriation, but the resource allocation piece was really important in the sense of being structured again and principled in a the way that we spend public dollars.

We found that the current funding envelope for the Department of Family Services, as you heard, often years we did surplus, and so I know in having met with my director of corporate services just last week about the fiscal outlook, we're going to seek to achieve a balanced budget, but there is a likelihood that we will be looking at a deficit because of the resources required to respond to the Auditor General's report, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**Chairman**: Thank you. Mr. Onalik wanted to supplement as well. Mr. Onalik.

Mr. Onalik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Part of the normal budget development processes is it's up to a department to come forward and there is a review of their business cases and suggestions. What is very different about this situation with Family Services is we have actively sought out business cases, we have actively supported the Department of Family Services in developing the business cases, and we are at the working level, reviewing them from outside of the normal process, I guess.

There is one thing I think that we have recognized in that as departments are competing for our limited dollars, it is often those who are best at writing business cases and who have the time to write the business cases that get the money. That has not necessarily been a reflection of need. I think, upfront, cabinet gave us the freedom to say we know there is a need there. Considering the numerous issues that Family Services is dealing with in trying to address the Office of the Auditor General's report, we have tried to make it so that Family Services can make that case while still responding to the Office of the Auditor General.

I know it's a little bit of backend machinery, but it's important that we have given that space to Family Services. Fundamentally, I think everybody agrees and it's mentioned in the press release that there aren't enough people to do the jobs that they are supposed to be doing. There haven't been enough resources to do the jobs, so it's a bit of freedom to be able to look at it from a different lens. This is a crisis, so we are treating it as a crisis with some quicker response times and stuff. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you. I have no more names on my list. At this time, before I invite the Office of the Auditor General to provide closing comments, I would like to make a few observations myself.

Through the lines of questioning that have been asked and the responses that are being made, people in the general public may think this is...I used the term "unicorns and rainbows" earlier with the discussion with Mr. Onalik. There are a lot of commitments and a lot undertakings being absorbed by the Department of Family Services right now and it's going to take some time. We recognize that. There were some pretty firm commitments made not just with timelines but with budgetary upcoming requests and things of that nature. Mr. Ellsworth's comment that even if he was given a pile of money today doesn't necessarily mean that that's the solution. Business cases are provided in detail for a reason, so you know what the expectations are of that money to be allocated to a department and what some of the projected outcomes will be.

There was a lot of discussion on reprofiled positions within the Department of Family Services and an allusion to upcoming requests for more positions. I would strongly recommend the government and all departments, but especially in this case right now, to take a look at existing positions that can be reprofiled before our public service keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger,

yet we're sitting at a 60 percent capacity. We don't even know where our trouble spots are until we are fully staffed. I would caution bringing forward requests for new positions without those exercises being undertaken fully.

There has been a lot of discussion on the information management system. I thing, again, people in the public have to realize that that is not the magic bullet either. It is one tool in the tool box for the department and for the government to make improvements with measurable outcomes, to have that information readily available so that we know where our kids are and how they are being looked after.

There was discussion on the interagency coordination protocol and that it hasn't been very well used. From experience, we would say that it's not just this file under that interagency coordination protocol. This is just one of many files that that agreement or that protocol is established, so I would strongly encourage Mr. Onalik, especially in this, to make sure that departments are talking to each other and that where information can and should be shared, that it is, without silos and barriers.

We look at the frontline training. Again, a lot of commitments on training and orientation and cultural awareness, where again, you need the resources to be able to put that out there in way that it is going to have measurable outcomes so that people can get to their job as soon as possible.

I'm hoping that Mr. Hayes, in his closing comments.... We were at a meeting last week where the discussion of sustainable development goals in the audit realm is a new venture whereas typically auditors are not there to provide advice on policy; just to measure the outcomes and the

implementation of policy. As this seems to be kind of a new adaptation of the audit function, I'm hoping Mr. Hayes would be able to talk very briefly about how that works in the audit world.

Finally, the Deputy Minister has made a number of commitments to provide additional information to the Committee in written form and we will expect that information at the earliest convenience, and that the transcripts for the last two days will be produced and posted on the Assembly's website.

Finally, it was upon some advice of one of my colleagues here, I think it's very important that a lot of the topics that we have been talking about for the last couple of days are very deep and troubling. I just want to remind people of the opportunity that there are some helplines that are available: the Kamatsiaqtut Help Line at 1-800-265-3333 and the Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 and to text 686868. If this has triggered or if anyone has any concerns about loved ones that they feel they need to reach out for assistance, please do so.

With that, I'll invite the Office of the Auditor General to provide his closing comments...the Deputy of the Auditor General. Thank you.

**Mr. McKenzie**: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just joking because you gave me a promotion, so I figured I would continue with that.

## >>Laughter

Our report gave the Legislative Assembly a picture at a point in time. That picture was not very different than the picture that we gave this Legislative Assembly in 2011 and 2014, and that's a reason for sadness. We are

hopeful that our report will be an opportunity to drive some change and we have heard from the Deputy Ministers over the course of the last few days that they're treating it that way. Our audit report was intended to be helpful.

This has been a difficult audit for everybody. Obviously, the children, youth, and young adults who rely on the government for protection and support are at the front of our minds. We can't forget about the families, the families who also need the support, the communities that need the support, and we certainly can't forget about the frontline workers, whether they're the community social services workers or the health care professionals, that support all of the people that are affected in these situations.

Likewise, the regional directors, the supervisors and senior managers do see how this affects the people on the ground, so this is very emotional. We saw some of the examples that we had given in this report be very emotional for the people that were talking to us about their lived experiences and the things that they saw. I can tell you without a doubt that affected our audit team very deeply. It was really hard for our audit team because we care about the people.

As we were going through this audit, we have to say thank you to all of the officials and you have heard about all the organizations that we talked to during this audit and the officials within the government. We have to say thank you to them for being forthcoming, honest, and sharing with us because that's the only way that we can provide a complete picture to you.

As disappointing as our audit results were, that's the backward-looking perspective now. We need to move forward and look at the future. There is reason to be hopeful and I

say that recognizing that in 2011 and 2014 they committed in the action plans to make changes and we didn't see that. Nevertheless, as an eternal optimist, I'm hopeful that we will see positive change and the reasons why I am hopeful is because you have seen four of your Deputy Ministers appear before you over the last few days, they have been open, they have been honest, they have been transparent, they have expressed a willingness to change, they have expressed an interest in accountability.

Now, there are things that can be improved still with accountability, for example, clear timelines that all of us, the Office of the Auditor General and the Members of this Committee, can use to hold the government to their commitments. That would be helpful and I think that some of the questions have tried to scratch at that.

The idea of bold, transformational change means not doing things the same way that it has always been done. I think the Deputy Minister mentioned that a couple of minutes ago. The Deputy Minister yesterday, and I'll say this tongue in cheek, said that he wants to overdeliver. I would be happy to be able to come back and report to you at some point in time in the next year or two that the department has done what it said it would do. Overdelivering would be icing on the cake, but I really hope that the department can make the transformational, bold changes that it is talking about.

Strategies, communication plans, and IT systems are pieces of paper if they're not implemented and we can't forget that's really what we want to see is improved outcomes for the children, youth, young adults, and families.

Another reason why I'm encouraged is because of the engagement that all of us

have. We've had two very engaging days of discussion on this. Ultimately, it's on us to also keep the heat on the department.

I'll end by sharing a bit of an anecdote. When I landed in Nunavut on Monday evening, there was a young boy at the airport and he was running around with a big smile on his face. It was clear that he was excited. Yesterday when we were talking to dinner, there was a group of children playing and they were laughing; they were having a great time.

With the heaviness of this report and the hearing yesterday, I reflected on seeing those children and I wondered what I would say if one of them looked me in the eye and said, "If I needed help, if I needed protection, would I get it?" And I don't know if I could ever say right now that they would, but I want to be able to come back and be able to say that they would. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes, I would also like to give you an opportunity to touch on some of the scope of the upcoming audit with public housing. I do realize that you're leaving tonight, so I thought you would have an opportunity to get that in. As well, if you could just touch a little bit on the sustainable development aspect being introduced into the audit function. Mr. Hayes.

**Mr. Hayes**: Thank you for that. I got caught up in the child and family services subject matter.

The sustainable development goals, let me just say that those have been issued by the United Nations, signed on by, I believe, 192 countries in 2015 or thereabouts. They express what I would describe as objectives for countries that have signed on. They're not intended to overwrite or to wipe away culture

and the country's way of doing things and in fact, they recognize that there are distinct groups and distinct communities within every country that have their own goals, objectives, ways of doing business, and priorities.

By no means should the sustainable development goals be looked upon as something that is being imposed on anyone. What they really represent are 17 goals that are intended to drive thinking about present and future generations. Some of the goals relate to equality. Some of the goals relate to life on land, life in the water, the environment, and climate change. There are some goals that relate to things like infrastructure and industry.

Ultimately, I think that if we look at Inuit societal values and compare them to the sustainable development goals, we would see many similarities. It won't be word for word or anything like that, but you would see many similarities. People should be treated with respect. People should be given opportunities on an equal basis. Really, we should be thinking about how we treat our land, our environment, and our society so that the future generation benefits the way that we have and the way that the people before us have.

We use these sustainable development goals in our audit work to help frame the discussion around what, quite frankly, is important on the way that we use resources, the way that we operate as a society, the way that we treat our environment, and ultimately, we hope that the government uses the sustainable development goals as a tool to prompt discussion. For the most part, we can link some of the commitments of governments to actual specific sustainable development goals and that's what we try to do in our report just to show that we are

touching on matters that are important across the world.

Mr. Chairman, if it's okay, I might move to the audit on housing and I know that Members spoke with the Auditor General in May a little bit about future audit planning. The information on our website does mention that we are currently working on finding an audit that will be tabled in Nunavut in the fall of 2024 on public housing.

The Auditor General came back and mentioned the information that she had received and the perspectives that were shared when she met with this Committee in May. The audit team that's working on it is a different audit team than the team that's here today, but the audit team that is working on it has begun to engage with the Nunavut Housing Corporation and we will soon be reaching out to communities to better understand the issues and risks.

After that, we will be able to land on a scope and focus for the audit. That normally appears in what we call an audit plan summary that is shared with the entities that we audit. This won't be a direct follow-up of the 2008 report that we did, but some aspects of it will be covered in our audit. We plan to include in this audit an early assessment of some of the initiatives that the Government of Nunavut has been undertaking, including Nunavut 3000.

I appreciate the Chair giving me the heads up that some Members might have questions about the recent exchange of correspondence that the Auditor General had with the Minister. I just want to make sure that I'm clear about that exchange. The Minister was receptive to the audit all the way through, so the Minister hasn't suggested that we shouldn't be auditing this subject matter, but the Minister wanted us to be aware of various

initiatives and developments that are underway that could influence the timing of the audit. Nunavut 3000, for example, a governance review that had been conducted, the revamping of homeownership and rental programs, and some other changes into senior management were mentioned in the letter.

Quite frankly, there's never a good time for an audit. If you ask the government, there's never a good time for an audit. We understand that every time we go in and audit it, it does add to the workload of the departments or agencies that we're auditing, but at the same time, we feel that based on all the discussions that we've had and all of the research that the audit team has done, housing is a priority for the Government of Nunavut and it wouldn't be good for us to wait longer to do an audit and report to this Legislative Assembly on our findings.

I talked a little bit, I think yesterday, about how audits are often backward-looking and that we're trying to change some of that. We know that the government is implementing new initiatives and some of them are in their early stages. In our view, that makes this the exact right time to be in and we might be able to contribute to better outcomes.

I might stop there, but I think that before I do, I have to apologize to the interpreters because I think I was talking very fast there, but one more shout-out to the interpreters. Thank you very much. It's so helpful to be able to...

## >>Applause

...to have the incredible translation that we do, so thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman**: Thank you, Mr. Hayes and to all your team, not just the team at the witness

table. I know that behind the scenes, there's a lot of work and it's not just Madam Cotnoir and Mr. McKenzie that are doing all that work.

With that, I want to thank again the witnesses that appeared before the Committee and all the substantial work behind the scenes there as well too. I know there's a team behind every one of you that are sitting at this table. When we're talking about capacity and resources, we have tied up a significant amount of it, but I just want to thank all the questions from the Members and the responses from the witnesses. I would like to thank the Office of the Auditor General and I do hope that Ms. Hogan is able to join us at some point.

With that, I will adjourn. We are meeting tomorrow morning at 9 a.m. to begin the televised hearing on the Committee of Government Operations and Public Accounts with the '21-22 Public Accounts for the Government of Nunavut. We will [reconvene] at 9 a.m. and just a reminder to Members that in about 9 minutes, we have a Full Caucus meeting. Thank you.

>>Committee adjourned at 17:19