

and last, but certainly not least, Craig Simailak, Member for Baker Lake.

As my colleagues are aware, section 46 of the federal *Nunavut Act* prescribes the role of the Auditor General of Canada in relation to Nunavut's territorial accounts, which we will be looking at later this week, and also provides that the Auditor General "shall call attention to any other matter falling within the scope of the audit made under subsection (1) that, in the opinion of the auditor, should be brought to the attention of the Assembly."

The Office of the Auditor General has addressed the matter of Child and Family Services in Nunavut on a number of occasions and has previously brought forward reports on this topic to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut in 2011, 2014, and 2023. The report under consideration today is the fourth report on this topic.

The 2025 Follow-up on Child and Family Services in Nunavut was formally tabled in the Assembly on March 5, earlier this year. The Office of the Auditor General has indicated that regular status updates to monitor the government's actions taken to respond to the Office's findings will follow in the future.

Today's televised hearing provides an opportunity for members of the Standing Committee to examine a number of themes and topics raised in the follow-up report, including:

- The delivery of services to Nunavut's vulnerable children, youth and their families;
- Their government's role in addressing the root causes of deficiencies that impact the delivery of such services;
- Family Services' actions to address service capacity, training and information management;

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- The health, safety and well-being of Family Services employees; and
- The Ilagiitsarniq Family Wellness Strategic Framework and Action Plan.

Officials from the Government of Nunavut have been invited to appear at this televised hearing, which will provide an opportunity for the Standing Committee to examine the extent to which the government, as a whole, has been taking action on issues identified by the Auditor General.

Finally, I would like to address some housekeeping matters.

I ask all members and witnesses to ensure that their cell phones and other electronic devices do not disrupt these proceedings.

I ask that all members and witnesses go through the Chair in order to assist our interpreters and technical staff. I also ask that all members and witnesses refrain from the use of acronyms during these proceedings.

Members of the standing Committee have been provided with a number of documents for their ease of reference during this televised hearing. For the benefit of our witnesses and interpreters, I ask members to be precise when quoting from, or making reference to, specific documents.

This hearing is being televised live across Nunavut on community cable stations and the direct-to-home satellite services of both the Bell and Shaw networks. It is also being live-streamed on the Legislative Assembly's website. Transcripts of the televised hearing will be posted on the Legislative Assembly's website at a later date.

Under Rule 91(5) of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, the government is required to table a formal written

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response to reports of Standing Committees within 120 days of their presentation, and I anticipate that we will be presenting our report on this televised hearing at the upcoming spring sitting of the House.

I would like to now invite the Office of the Auditor General to make an opening statement.

Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: *Unnusakkut*, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon. I am pleased to be in Iqaluit today to discuss the follow-up audit of Child and Family Services. The report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut on 5 March, 2025. With me today is James McKenzie, the principal responsible for this audit.

In 2023, we presented to this Assembly an audit report on Child and Family Services in Nunavut. That report described a system in crisis, plagued by multiple failures in every area we examined. We found deficiencies in the government's response to reports of suspected harm, in the screening of new foster homes, and in following up on the safety and well-being of children, youth, and young adults placed in care in the territory and elsewhere in Canada.

Our 2023 report was the third time since 2011 that our office raised these concerns, highlighting systemic problems affecting the delivery of child and family services in Nunavut. Given the ongoing risk to children, we urged the Government of Nunavut to take immediate action to protect vulnerable young people.

The persistent lack of progress since 2011 led us to commit to conducting regular follow-up audits. The report provided in March, covering the period from May 2023 to October 2024, is the first of these follow-up audits.

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urgency and determination to address longstanding gaps in the child and family services system. We have taken deliberate and meaningful steps toward lasting change and continue to move forward with a whole-of-government approach focused on building a stronger, more responsive, and accountable system. Our shared goal is clear: to ensure every child in Nunavut grows up safe, supported, and with the care every child has the right to.

Mr. Chair, the Department of Family Services developed the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan in direct response to the findings raised in the Auditor General's 2023 Report on Child and Family Services. Ilagiitsiarniq reflects our commitment to developing solutions that are culturally grounded, community-informed, and focused on implementation, sustainability and accountability.

The strategic plan was developed in close collaboration with departments across government, including those that are represented here today, as well as with Inuit organizations such as Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and community stakeholders. These partnerships have ensured that the plan is both cross-cutting and responsive to Inuit values and community realities.

Ilaigiitsiarniq brings together and consolidates all Representative for Children and Youth recommendations to the department, as well as a response to the root causes identified in the Auditor General's 2023 audit report. By grouping these findings into seven overarching priority areas, the Action Plan creates a unified and strategic response to address long-standing systemic challenges. The priorities include:

- Strengthening Organizational Efficiency;
- Enhancing Case Management Quality;

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- Improving Prevention and Early Intervention Services;
- Strengthening Community Engagement and Partnerships;
- Enhancing Training and Professional Development;
- Improving Data Management and Information Sharing; and finally
- Strengthening Recruitment, Retention, and Workforce Development

A Deputy Minister Advisory Committee has been established to lead the implementation of the strategic plan. This committee consists of senior leadership from within Family Services and is supported by a third-party resource that provides change management, monitoring, and evaluation expertise.

Mr. Chair, Given the breadth and complexity of the strategic plan, the Department is now focused on building a detailed implementation plan that is developed through consultations with frontline staff and all levels of leadership. This implementation plan will add further structure to the work underway by establishing timelines, identifying and prioritizing action items, and reinforcing clear lines of accountability. The implementation plan is being designed to serve as a practical roadmap for turning high-level commitments into tangible, measurable actions and outcomes. It will identify responsibilities in the change process, provide tools for measuring success, and ensure that efforts across the government remain aligned with the strategic goals. As a whole government response to the Auditor General's report, this implementation plan will also include action items and timelines developed through departmental collaboration between the Department of Family Services, Transportation and Infrastructure Nunavut, Nunavut Housing Corporation, and Human Resources. The inclusion of these action items in the implementation plan will ensure

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Over 70 individual standards have been drafted across the service continuum. Twelve practice standards have been finalized and implemented, each accompanied by tools and forms to support staff in translating expectations into action, including documentation templates, practice checklists, decision-making tools, and

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sample scripts, tailored to Nunavut's legislative framework. These standards are:

- Standard 201: Receiving and Screening Referrals of Suspected Harm or Neglect
- Standard 202: Investigations
- Standard 501: Case Documentation
- Minimum Contact
- Access Planning
- Confidentiality and Consent for the Disclosure of Personal Information
- Clinical Supervision
- Critical Incident/Serious Occurrence Reporting
- Transferring Files to Another Community within Nunavut and Requesting Courtesy Supervision
- Transferring Files to Another Province or Territory and Requesting Courtesy Supervision
- Out-of-Territory Specialized Services; and finally,
- Emergency Placement for Out-of-Territory Specialized Services.

The remaining standards are progressing through review, validation, and staged implementation.

Mr. Chair, staffing remains one of the Department's top priorities, as well as one of the most significant challenges. Our goal is not only to address the immediate need for skilled professionals but also to build a workforce that is reflective of the communities we serve and is equipped to provide culturally informed services for Nunavut families.

The Department has made significant strides in strengthening staffing, training, and organizational structure since the last hearing. The Family Wellness Division has undergone a comprehensive restructuring. This reorganization will improve accountability, resource allocation, and responsiveness to the

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As part of our strategy to improve recruitment and retention, we are working in close collaboration with the Nunavut Housing Corporation and the Department of Human Resources to explore more targeted solutions to the housing barrier. During recent discussions, we agreed on the need to align housing allocations with hard-to-fill positions – particularly in remote communities where

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staffing challenges are most severe. We also emphasized the importance of integrated workforce and housing planning as the necessary accommodations are in place before positions are staffed. Adequate housing remains a critical and ongoing challenge, and we will continue to advocate for increased investments in staff housing across the territory. Addressing this issue is essential to building and sustaining the social services workforce Nunavummiut rely on.

Mr. Chair, to build on our efforts to address critical barriers like housing for staff, it is equally important to strengthen the systems that support the delivery of services. Effective information management and data accuracy play a key role in ensuring that child and family services are consistently and effectively provided. Since the release of the 2023 Auditor General's report, the department has made significant progress in strengthening the systems that underpin our work, with a particular focus on improving the accuracy and reliability of case data.

The Matrix case management system marks a foundational improvement in managing data related to children and families. It provides a centralized, secure platform for more accurate, timely, and complete documentation of case information, which is central to enhancing service effectiveness and ensuring consistent data management across the territory. Notably, improvements in tracking the status of children in care – both inside and outside Nunavut – are already helping to enhance case planning and service delivery. We recently implemented a critical incident reporting module in Matrix, which has an established workflow and a multi-layer methodology to reviews and approvals. This quality assurance mechanism will be used to address gaps in practice as well as highlight inaccuracies in reporting.

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Alongside these efforts to strengthen data systems and ensure consistency, we've also updated a key interdepartmental framework that supports coordinated responses across government, the Child Abuse and Neglect Response Agreement. The revised agreement reaffirms our government's commitment to coordinated, culturally competent, and trauma-sensitive practices that prioritize the safety and well-being of children. This revision was informed by the recommendations of the Representative for Children and Youth, with meaningful input from community partners, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the frontline staff who engage directly with families. It was shaped through a jurisdictional scan and designed to close service gaps and improve frontline coordination and integrated service delivery. The revised Agreement now provides a clearer framework for interdepartmental collaboration, with enhanced protocols for information sharing and a roadmap for conducting joint investigations. These improvements ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and that every child receives services proportionate to their individual needs. The revised Child Abuse and Neglect Response Agreement will inform the development of a training model for service providers as well as create a communication plan. A third-party resource has also been

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Mr. Chair, the challenges we face are not limited to a single department. The Department of Family Services has worked closely with colleagues across the government to advance integrated solutions related to recruitment, staffing, infrastructure, and housing. The Deputy Minister Advisory Committee tasked with oversight of our strategic plan implementation will play an important role in ensuring the advancement of this very important work.

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I would also like to acknowledge the whole government's approach to ensuring coordination across departments in implementing the interdepartmental goals stemming from the Office of the Auditor General's recommendations and the ensuing Strategic Action Plan. Departments have worked together to ensure that goals identified as interdepartmental in scope – such as housing, office space, staffing, and recruitment – have been advanced collaboratively, with shared accountability and planning. Embedding these goals in our implementation plan will ensure that momentum continues, and that target goals are met, allowing a transparent and accountable method to progress reporting on these root causes. This whole-of-government effort reflects a strong and ongoing commitment to supporting Family Services in achieving outcomes for children and youth across the territory.

Mr. Chair, in closing, at the heart of this work is our steady commitment to Nunavut's children and families. While we've made meaningful progress in systems, staffing, and strategy, our focus remains firmly on achieving real, measurable outcomes. Guided by lessons from past audits and driven by a shared responsibility across government, we're committed to helping every child in Nunavut grow up safe, supported, and empowered to thrive within a caring community.

We recognize that lasting, systemic change takes time – we are building momentum through a whole-of-government approach grounded in collaboration, accountability, and long-term vision. I want to emphasize the importance of continued cooperation across departments to ensure the success of these initiatives. As we move forward, we remain committed to open and transparent communication.

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I would also like to acknowledge the dedication of our frontline staff, who work tirelessly every day to support Nunavummiut. Their efforts are the foundation of our system, and we are working to provide them with the resources and support they deserve.

Ultimately, this work is not about structures or strategies – it is about ensuring every child in Nunavut can grow up safe, supported, and strong. Together, we are laying the foundation for lasting change – one that reflects our values, honours our communities, and puts children at the centre of everything we do. My colleagues and I, Mr. Chair, are ready to engage in dialogue and respond to any questions the committee may have.

Qujannamiik, Iqsivautaq.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. I would like to give the Deputy Minister for Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs an opportunity to provide her opening comments. Ms. Fowler.

Ms. Fowler: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. Mr. Chairman, the issues we are here to discuss affect too many of us very personally. These are not easy conversations to have. It is our job as parents, neighbours, and leaders to protect Nunavut's children and youth, and we have the responsibility to keep them safe.

The Government of Nunavut is committed to addressing the findings of the Auditor General and improving the services we provide all Nunavut families, and particularly children and youth.

I'm grateful to everyone who is open to using their lived experience to create change. Together we can break the cycles of abuse and intergenerational trauma, and we can only succeed with the support of the entire legislature and all Nunavummiut.

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I'll just begin with the Office of the Auditor General's witnesses. Your office conducted an audit of Nunavut's children, youth and family programs and services in 2011, then a follow-up audit in 2014 and another in 2023, as we know. The current 2025 audit is described as the first of what will be regular status updates to monitor actions taken to respond to our findings.

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foundational elements, we didn't have as large of a team as what we used in 2023. It was slightly scaled back, but our future teams will be larger in scope.

I would also add that we are conducting other audits of programs here in Nunavut, one of which will be presented in the next couple of weeks on public housing. So we do keep our eye on other programs of the government. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chair. How does your office decide which audits to follow up on and how resources are allocated to ensure that other audit areas are not overlooked? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We undertake in any role audit selection process where we look at the priority areas for the government, we look at where spending happens, we look at the improvements that have been made since our previous work. There is a whole calculus that goes into selecting audits. We have limited resources, right. We can only do so much, and what we try to identify is where our audits can bring the best value for the Legislative Assembly.

In terms of the selection of follow-up audits, most of the time we would be able to see whether or not concrete, material improvements have been made just in interactions with the departments along the way, and I would say that echoing the deputy minister's comments earlier, the commitment to transparency is definitely noticed here when we are engaging with the department at this point in time. What we want to make sure, though, is that the intentions and the goodwill that has been

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expressed is actually materializing into outcomes for children, youth, and families.

So as I said, the Auditor General, when she presented the report in 2023 felt that this was maybe one of the most important areas that we could possibly audit, looking at the importance of families, communities, and the children of the territory. So she was committed to make sure that she would be part of the solution with this. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Hayes. You mentioned that a future audit is expected to cover outcomes. I wonder to what extent did you expect to be reviewing outcomes during this follow-up. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We certainly would have expected to see some improved outcomes. At the same time we did know that the department was working on the strategic action plan and that there had been a change in leadership in the department. And those factors will always mean that there will be a little bit of stock-taking and some time to identify where to make improvements. So to some degree I understand why progress takes time. I'll confess that when we issue recommendations, we do expect action. The recommendations that we issued in 2011 and 2014, it was very frustrating that those recommendations had not been addressed, because their whole purpose was to improve outcomes.

I guess when I look at our 2023 report, I expected that actions would be taken to improve concrete outcomes. I would expect that we would see some of that at this point in time. I understand why it's slow. I understand

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that information gathering is part of the reason why it takes time to recognize whether actions have resulted in improvements for children, youth, and families. And I know that the information system is being implemented now. We should see better improvements based on what the department is doing, and that's what I would say at this point in time we would expect with our next report. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you, Mr. Hayes. I'll move to the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs. Following the tabling of the 2023 report on the Office of the Auditor General on Child and Family Services in Nunavut, the premier stated on May 31, 2023:

“Taking a whole-of-government approach EIA will provide oversight across departments for services related to the well-being of children, youth and families.”

I have two-part question but I'll stick to this one. Since 2023, how has the department provided oversight to Government of Nunavut departments and monitored actions taken in response to the Auditor General's 2023 findings? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Fowler.

Ms. Fowler: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the member for the question. Following this I'm sure you've been informed through our Department of Family Services some of the initial steps that were taken through them, but with respect to the role that Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs has played, taking a whole-of-government approach, the intention behind all of that is for all of our joint activities across departments and agencies to address a common goal. Some of that role more specifically involves integrating policy

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morning, and that we continue to explore expanding the scope of responsibilities for Finance to potentially include some of the audit responsibilities linked to overall performance and accountability as referenced in this statement.

With respect to the development of a performance accountability framework, I did mention this morning that this work has not begun. We are still determining, at least from the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, as it relates to this internal audit function. As soon as we are able to solidify the scope of responsibilities for what this will look like and where it will be housed, we will look to finalize an accountability framework. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll just remind everybody that that swift response is now 23 months in the making, and to me, that doesn't seem very swift.

I would just like to go back to the Office of the Auditor General and just ask for some thoughts on whether or not that's a swift response. To me it feels a little bit like moving goal posts, and it makes it a lot more difficult for me, in my role, to hold the Government of Nunavut responsible on this response. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In terms of the status right now, clearly our report shows that foundational elements have been taken in terms of actions, but we would still consider that there is a crisis. And I would say that at two years since our last report, this would be the time that we would normally be coming back starting at a full out follow-up audit, if we were going to be doing just one, and expecting

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<p>that all of the actions are leading to improved outcomes and better services and protection.</p>	<p>ርኬዎሙ ዋህሪ ለሀገራችን ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም።</p>
<p>So in effect, I mean, I said it in my opening statement: We have been looking at this subject matter for almost a generation, and while we understand that government has a rhythm and a pace for improvement, it is fair for everybody to be impatient right now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.</p>	<p>ወንጀል ለሀገራችን ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም። ለሀገራችን ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም። ለሀገራችን ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም።</p>
<p>Chairman: Ms. Brewster.</p>	<p>ጋራ ጥያቄ: ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም።</p>
<p>Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't know. I think impatient is a really kind word, especially given that we know that this audit is meant to ensure we are taking care of our most vulnerable citizens, our children, and so I'm really concerned about that.</p>	<p>ወንጀል: ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም። ለሀገራችን ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም። ለሀገራችን ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም።</p>
<p>I guess I would just like to know from the Auditor General, with all of this knowledge of the snail's pace and the mention in your opening statements that we're not seeing prioritized action plans and implementation times, is there advice that can be shared immediately, with the knowledge that the Department of Family Services in their action plan hasn't set clear goals and dates and timelines? There are, I think it's 80 action items. Should we be considering discussing giving clear priorities to come from us so that we can ensure that there are some measurable outcomes in the near future? Thank you, Mr. Chair.</p>	<p>ወንጀል: ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም። ለሀገራችን ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም። ለሀገራችን ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም።</p>
<p>Chairman: Mr. Hayes.</p>	<p>ወንጀል: ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም።</p>
<p>Mr. Hayes: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the member's question connects very well with some of the comments that I made in the opening statement about the strategic action plan. The importance of measurable targets and accountabilities, timelines, base lines, those are all ways that the Legislative Assembly, this committee can hold the department to progress,</p>	<p>ወንጀል: ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም። ለሀገራችን ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም። ለሀገራችን ምንም ዓይነት ጥቅም ላይ አይውልም።</p>

to be able to identify what has been happening from an earlier point in time to a future point in time.

I think that in terms of what help the Office of the Auditor General can provide, I'll say a few things here. I suppose I can be even more transparent in the sense that one of the reasons why we decided to continue with regular follow-up audits is because we recognized that where we put our audit lens typically attracts action or attention by the government. It's something that we have to be very responsible about, because the choices of the work that we do will result in resources being diverted from one program to another. But we made the decision that it was important here, to remain engaged in this subject matter. The children, youth, and families, communities of the territory deserve that. So from our perspective that's one area that we can help.

When the government was developing the strategic action plan, we made the offer that we would be happy to provide thoughts and perspectives, and indeed, the department engaged with us at that point in time. We are always happy to maintain ongoing dialogue and to assist. We have to recognize that our audit role requires an element of independence, but at the same time there are ways that we can support the government in moving the progress forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Hayes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Hayes, when the Auditor General did engage on that development of the framework or action plan, did the Office of the Auditor General give the red flag that that strategic action plan lacks targets and base lines, clear accountabilities and specific timelines to measure progress? And if so, we might see what the outcome is, but what's the advantage of offering feedback and advice that

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We have obviously been in touch with the department all the way through our audit work and will continue to do so on a regular basis, but I don't think I'm surprising anybody by

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Fast forward a little bit. By October of that year I was installed on a permanent, or well, at the pleasure of the premier, if you will, Mr. Chair. At that time I made some pretty swift moves

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So in my mind we started with the foundation which was the framework; we set up the walls, the structure, which was the plan; and now we're dealing with the features, which is the implementation plan with accountabilities and such. That's the way we had planned to undertake this work, recognizing again,

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simultaneously, there was no intention to not act immediately. I feel that, and I'm proud of the work that we've gone. I feel that we've acted as quickly as possible, recognizing the processes that are in place for resource allocation, staffing.

And then we know, Mr. Chair, that I can have a thousand new staff tomorrow, probably. We don't have housing for them, Mr. Chair, and we struggle with office space. And so this dialogue that has been occurring interdepartmentally through a whole-of-government approach is additional work to ensure that this plan is sustainable and will withstand scrutiny while we work with our partners to create better outcomes for Nunavummiut. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thanks very much for that detailed explanation. You did mention that Family Services is now moving into evaluation and monitoring, yet there still is no implementation plan. How do you evaluate and monitor when you lack targets and base lines and clear accountabilities, specific timelines to measure progress? How is that going to happen? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to that I would say that there were outcomes identified within the strategic plan, and so while we continue to get into greater detail with respect to the implementation plan and the subordinate work plans, this evaluation and monitoring framework will align with the ongoing accountability framework that will be, as I mentioned, tabled in this impending sitting. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

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Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that very good question. I would tend to, in my personal and professional opinion, suggest that the biggest priority right now is, A, compliance with standards to ensure better outcomes for people coming into contact with the child welfare system; recruitment and retention, and that includes ensuring adequate office space and housing is available. I would say probably those are my top two, and if I were going to go a little further, ensuring the appropriate implementation of the data

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So my next question is for the Department of Family Services. You've mentioned in your opening comments reorganization of the Family Wellness Branch to improve accountability, resource allocation, and responsiveness, and I believe that the branch has 136 positions. I guess a two-part question: Can you provide us an update today on the status of those positions, how many of these positions are filled and vacant; and second part of the question is, will you provide a comprehensive org chart of the branch and all the divisions to highlight the changes and how this will improve the accountability resource allocation and responsiveness. Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Just so I'm clear, Mr. Chair, you want to know how many of the leadership positions are filled or the whole division?

Chairman: The whole division.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can I commit to getting that information to the committee at the earliest? Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Chair. And I would like to thank you for that response as well as the response to Ms. Brewster's request for your top three priorities. I think that they are all very important and appropriate. I would like to now focus on recruitment and retention, the biggest challenge being staff housing. Of your 136 positions in the Family Wellness Branch do you know how many positions have staff housing, and more importantly, do you know how many vacant positions will require staff housing? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

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report of the Nunavut Housing Corporation from 2023-2024, which is the 2023 summer construction season, indicated that there was 38 units under construction and 168, sorry 38 completed and 168 units under construction. But it doesn't indicate which are staff house are or public housing. Would you be able to provide an update on last year's construction of staff housing units? Thank you. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. Of last year's construction or contracts in place, there were 166 units in total, 146 of those being public housing and the remaining 20 would be designated for GN staff housing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the response. Unfortunately, with the precarious situation all departments are in, that 20 staff housing construction will barely alleviate many, not even a single department's need for staff housing.

Last fall we approved \$20 million for the construction of staff housing in the capital budget. Approximately how many staff housing units does the Nunavut Housing Corporation foresee building this upcoming construction season? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Clarke.

Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the member for the question. I will have to get back to the committee. I believe it's approximately 15. The annual budget that we were appropriated is approximately 10 million. The volume at which we are able to construct is limited, knowing the need for all departments.

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Mr. Chair, I made reference yesterday to Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated's recently released strategy document where they embraced and confirmed that they want to pursue these conversations further to identify what that looks like in the longer term. So that sort of defines what that engagement has looked like. We meet regularly. There's a working group through officials. There's a DM group, who is the senior officials committee that meets regularly amongst the stakeholder groups. And finally, there are the political meetings which happen I think on a biannual basis, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Chair, though I may be wrong.

Lastly, I just wanted to mention, Mr. Chair, that this relationship is invaluable, particularly as it pertains to ensuring that our work is in alignment with the Inuit view, that it reflects community. We recognize that it can't be a cookie-cutter approach. There needs to be some understanding that what works in one community may not work in another community. And so that relationship, of course, is paramount in terms of identifying how we are going to address the crisis.

And lastly, Mr. Chair, I would point out that depending on the decisions made by Nunavut Tunngavik and the regional Inuit organizations relevant to service delivery, it will likely require a pivot in the strategic direction. For example, if they want to assume some prevention services or other services then we would have to start designing what that looks like and how that happens, specific timelines, accountabilities, measurables, prioritization, and so of course we're committed to doing that when those decisions are made by the politicians involved. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Rogers.

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Mr. O'Donnell: With respect to the training, it was done as a train the trainer approach, which doesn't always work. We do have some older social workers that struggle with technology. They are, like DM Ellsworth had said, there is a lot of resistance to change. So we had to pivot really quickly to develop a training program that is five days long. It was developed by an adult educator that provides training for our core training, understands our business, the day-to-day pieces of child protection, and that saw a really big improvement in how people were accepting the actual system itself. There was a development of a manual for both supervisors and for frontline staff that they could have and have at their desktop and use as needed, which wasn't happening before.

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I would also maybe just add that there was I believe a question or a suggestion about adding in the notion of the complexity of cases. Obviously I think that has some merit. I think it would be very thoughtful in terms of how that gets done, like making sure that there are clear criteria for understanding the nature of cases. But over time, if there's that type of element that is added in, that might also shed some light on the work loads that individual community

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<p>social service workers are dealing with in different communities, and that can help inform decisions on things like staffing or other types of supports that may be needed, whether it's types of programs, services that could be implemented, or investment decisions in terms of those types of supports that can be put in place in communities.</p> <p>So I just wanted to underline the role I think that Matrix and not only from the frontline staff's perspective, but from the perspective of how management could potentially use that information to make informed decisions going forward on things like staffing and understanding the work load, if you will, that individuals are facing across the territory. Thank you.</p> <p>Chairman: Thank you for that, Mr. McKenzie. And it was raised yesterday. We were talking about comparable to elder care where you have high need versus very low need. That was one of the discussion topics on case loads, how it would impact, having somebody always having the harder cases.</p> <p>I am going to recognize the clock shortly, before I go to my next name and we will take a break, but I have a follow-up question with Mr. Clarke.</p> <p>When we were talking about staff housing construction, we know there has been some challenges, budgetary challenges as well as contracting, getting access to contractors to build houses in the budgeted amount. In the last three fiscal years, how many staff housing units were purchased, or sorry, how many were built and how many were leased in the last three fiscal years?</p> <p>I don't anticipate you have that information at your fingertips, but if you could include that in your response to the committee, I think that would be beneficial moving forward.</p>	<p>ለገረገጥኛው ምክር ቤት፣ ለጥቅም ስራ ለሚገኙት ሰራተኞች ማሳሰቢያ ማድረግ ይቻላል። ለዚህም ምክር ቤት ማሳሰቢያ ማድረግ ይቻላል።</p> <p>ልማት (ጋራ ጉዳይ): ምክር ቤት።</p> <p>ምክር ቤት: ምክር ቤት፣ ለጥቅም ስራ ለሚገኙት ሰራተኞች ማሳሰቢያ ማድረግ ይቻላል። ለዚህም ምክር ቤት ማሳሰቢያ ማድረግ ይቻላል።</p> <p>ልማት (ጋራ ጉዳይ): ምክር ቤት።</p> <p>ልማት (ጋራ ጉዳይ): ምክር ቤት፣ ለጥቅም ስራ ለሚገኙት ሰራተኞች ማሳሰቢያ ማድረግ ይቻላል። ለዚህም ምክር ቤት ማሳሰቢያ ማድረግ ይቻላል።</p> <p>ልማት (ጋራ ጉዳይ): ምክር ቤት።</p> <p>ጋራ (ጋራ ጉዳይ): ምክር ቤት፣ ለጥቅም ስራ ለሚገኙት ሰራተኞች ማሳሰቢያ ማድረግ ይቻላል። ለዚህም ምክር ቤት ማሳሰቢያ ማድረግ ይቻላል።</p> <p>ልማት (ጋራ ጉዳይ): ምክር ቤት።</p> <p>ጋራ (ጋራ ጉዳይ): ምክር ቤት፣ ለጥቅም ስራ ለሚገኙት ሰራተኞች ማሳሰቢያ ማድረግ ይቻላል። ለዚህም ምክር ቤት ማሳሰቢያ ማድረግ ይቻላል።</p>
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The remaining amount, 2 million for increased funding for income assistance initiatives, \$1.7 million, Mr. Chair, for career development, including work force development strategies in conjunction with Nunavut Arctic College and Nunavut Housing Corporation for the Nunavut 3000 strategy for building houses. 300,000, Mr. Chair, was allocated to corporate services for enhancement of the human resource division. \$800,000, Mr. Chair, for the poverty reduction initiative, such as increasing the allocation of funding for homeless shelters. And finally, Mr. Chair, 1.7 million of that allocation was for increased wages related to the changes in the Government of Nunavut's salary grid, and a 1.1 million dollar incremental increase for the new positions that were approved in 2024-25. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for explaining that very clearly. What I heard from your response, the money that is slated for something to do with fostering and houses or buildings down south. You mentioned outside of territory. I would like to be helped to understand, like the people who own these group homes that administer patients from Nunuvut, that money can be used to improve their own premises down there? Down, outside of Nunavut? That's all. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, just for both in- and out-of-territory group home services, and so there's two components to this response, ma'am, one of

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which was we've seen an increase in costs with respect to services being provided by service providers in southern Canada. It's important for this committee and viewers to understand that those costs are based on the level of need of the client. So for example, someone who is designated as a level 1 care need, the services can range between 90 to 200,000 dollars a year. Some services where it's a level 5, so the highest level of care required for them, can, I've seen contracts upwards of \$1 million for one person receiving care that they require.

Mr. Chair, the second component would be with respect to in-territory services. The department issued an RFP, recognizing the need to not only enhance in-territory options for consideration by the Director of Child and Family Services, because again we would rather, when able, keep children in Nunavut. The RFP also served as a mechanism to strengthen the terms and scope of the work that we wanted to see the contractors providing in territory. And so taken together, the increased costs of service provision in southern jurisdictions and the enhancements in Nunavut, we needed additional allocations to ensure that our resources were proportionate to trends and needs in the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think this is the first I've really heard about that, about the additional funds that they got. But the question I have on that matter is I know that services vary in prices, like the deputy minister said, on the level of need that are needed either physically or mentally. However, do you set up places for these people before the price is mentioned? And like the deputy minister said, some are not as expensive or those who don't need as much help, has that been updated or are they still using the same process that was set up years ago? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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These are children receiving similar services that require the same supports, but yet the children that are coming from Nunavut are going down there to receive those services, so we're trying to look at that at a more intimate level and try to establish a clear, basic rate that

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Ms. Killiktee: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's always good to have team work that gives us

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(interpretation) I will speak Inuktitut. The rates, I know that, as you have stated that you will look at the rates, but we do want the Nunavummiut clients that are provided service to be provided a good service, so that's why I was asking this question. We don't want to be worried about the Nunavut clients, but there's room for improvements and I know that some improvements are late. So I do want you to reconsider that so that our Nunavummiut clients, whether it's mental or whether it's physically disability, we should not be leaving them alone. We don't want our government to leave the Nunavummiut clients out of territory to have full service. So that's why I was asking those questions.

(interpretation ends) I'll move on to the Department of Human Resources. Paragraph number 18 of the audit report notes that, despite efforts, half of all the local community Family Wellness offices face temporary closures, due to staffing challenges. What steps has Human Resources taken to prioritize the staffing of Family Wellness offices in Nunavut communities? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Power: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've been supporting Family Services in trying to staff their Family Services offices quite diligently the past two years. We have prioritized staff housing for these positions. We've centralized the staffing of social workers positions, in particular. We have increased our outreach for where we're advertising social worker positions, to make sure we're getting as wide a reach as possible. I lost my train of thought when you told me to slow down.

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dealing with some of the frontline staff over the last number of years is that we have a very high complement of Inuit employment. I believe across the department it is at 67 per cent, which I believe somewhat surpasses most of the departments. I understand it's a little lower in our Wellness division. I will commit to this committee to getting those exact details for the member's question. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your response and that you will be providing more information to us in regards to the figure. I do appreciate that.

But in regards to this issue, the communities that have unilingual English-speaking persons social workers, they work very hard, and we require social worker in the communities because it's very important to have one in all the communities. But I thank you for working very hard towards this. And I thank you for being compassionate towards other communities. But I do want to voice, for the communities that don't have bilingual speaking, Inuktitut speakers, do you have to hire an interpreter from the community? How does it go about when you are getting an interpreter for the unilingual English-speaking social worker when there is one in the community?

The reason why I'm asking this question, I would like to know how this is conducted, because some people, we are approached by individuals when they had issues and they don't speak English, so that's why I'm asking this question. What's the procedure for the communities that don't have social worker. What's the procedure that you use, especially the reason why I'm asking, is because due to unilingual English-speaking social workers, they work very hard due to lack of support from the community. In my community we

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So there's a number of things happening to expand our ability to communicate in Inuktitut, which I said earlier is so very important, especially when we are engaging elders or unilingual Inuktitut-speaking Nunavummiut, and certainly we will continue our work to achieve an outcome that is meaningful for the users of our services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Just before I go to the next name on my list, a couple of people have raised the connection of Department of Health interpreter-translators but there are communities where the Family Services office is still located within the health centre. Is there overlap of support from clerk-interpreters in the health care field to assist Family Services interviews? Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm reasonably confident that is happening; however, I don't have direct knowledge of that. I know that we're working towards, again, as we mentioned, the implementation of the Surusinut Ikajuqtigiit Child Abuse Neglect Response Agreement, which would see more integrated services happening. And so while I suspect and I know that some Wellness staff are in health centres, they would assist in providing that service.

In the alternative, where our income assistance workers are working, where they work together with our family resource folks, I would imagine that they could also assist, but again, I would be a little bit concerned about the confidentiality aspects of engaging non-social workers to assist with social work matters because it does, this work attracts the highest level of confidentiality in the work that we do, and there have been decisions issued by the Information and Privacy Commissioner that does attest to that.

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I'll get back on that specific point, but I suspect it may be happening. My primary concern would be the confidentiality and privacy that would and should be attracted to the work that we're doing with community members, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Chairman: Next name I have on my list, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, all. Welcome and thank you for being part of this hearing. I'm sure we will have some fruitful engagements. First off, Mr. Chair, I would like to start off with opening comments from the Office of the Auditor General for a bit of clarification, perhaps, or elaboration.

On the very first page, number 2, it's stated we found deficiencies in the government's response to reports of suspected harm in the screening of new foster homes, and in following up on the safety and well-being of children and youth and young adults placed in care in the territory and elsewhere in Canada. I wonder if you can please elaborate on what kind of deficiencies you were mentioning in your paragraph here. That's the first question. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie: Thank you Mr. Chair, Hon. Member, for your question. So your question relates back to our 2023 report, and so for example we noted in our report, just an example, we were looking at responses to referrals, as you had mentioned, and subsequent investigations, and some of our observations related such as investigations either not being completed or not being completed according to the timelines that the department had established. The same for the screening of foster homes that the information that we expected to see according to what was required

by the department was not on file, so screening of the foster parents and doing home studies that are called for in the department's standards and procedures. And also following up so that the check-ins, for example, with respect to, there are minimum contact guidelines that are required, and looking for evidence that those were taking place.

We also noted issues with respect to, overall, the question of information management and so whether that was information with respect to the number of children and youth in care or the information that was or was not on file, and also just the general nature with respect to how information was being managed. We saw, although at the time there was a system called the client information system, which pre-dated the new Matrix client system, that not all staff were using that system. It wasn't available or accessible to all staff. There was information on individual client files that were in various formats, so it could be on paper or it was on local network drives, or maybe it may have been in the client information system. So there was no consolidated picture, if you will, of individual clients.

And we have noted in our current report just on the issue of client information or information management, the destruction of Matrix and how that has the potential to really solve some of those problems that we noted in the previous report with respect to how information with respect to individual clients, that is children and youth that were receiving supports or services, how that information is collected and how it's documented.

I kind of touched on this earlier. It's one thing I think for Matrix, from our perspective, is it's important. It's a system and it's really only a system, and the value of having that system is ensuring that it's consistently used, and so that information is available. If there's turnover, for

example, in staff, that they are able to easily access information on an individual client.

But also, the value that it has or the potential value and the opportunity that it presents is that management can use the information that's in Matrix to generate reports on, for example, how the standards that are set are being met, whether they are being complied with, but also in terms of just things like work load across communities, getting a better understanding of essentially the children and youth and the families that are being served across the territory, so it provides a more consolidated approach.

Those are, again, some of the examples that are from our 2023 report, and then just touching on what we saw on our current report with respect to information management. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank you for the response. To the Department of Family Services, did the department agree with the Office of the Auditor General that these were deficiencies? Did the department agree with that? And when did the department do to begin working on some of these deficiencies? You don't need to respond to all the deficiencies they mentioned, but perhaps some, maybe; or if you want to do them all, it's up to you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So Mr. Chair, I would note that for the reference of those present that information management was determined to be one of the root causes of the crisis that was noted by the Office of the Auditor General in 2023. I would wholly agree with their findings that the way that information was being managed previously was problematic, to say the least. I would say that it

could have attracted some privacy issues, as well, given the nature of the information that was being collected in various means on various mediums, paper-based, thumb drives, Y-drives.

In response, and let me just qualify this a little bit. The information management system, in my view, is the backbone to the operation. Again, as the representative from the Auditor General's office mentioned, not only does it guide the work of the social workers and the supervisors to be able to create that check and balance required, it also provides the opportunity to assess resource allocation and policy development.

But the Matrix solution is a centralized repository for that information, so recognizing the import of its backbone, the nature and its import with respect to the case management function of social workers, and its ability to inform executive-level policy and resource allocation decisions, it was launched quite quickly. The phase 1 launch didn't go as well as planned, as we had originally planned. We are currently into what we call phase 2 of the implementation of the solution, if you will. This phase is bringing in all available legacy data so that we can understand not only just what we've collected since its implementation but everything else that has been collected to date.

One of my colleagues, I believe it was Dr. Foote earlier today, said there's a process of cleaning the data. We are currently undertaking a similar process where we've brought in all of the legacy data. Some of the sets don't match up with the current sets that are in the new system. We were required to examine well over 1,300 records, and that was just the main record. There's subordinate records underneath that, so there was misclassifications that had happened.

What we've done now is we've created repositories within the system so that that data is indexed and is searchable so we can continue to access legacy data while we develop ongoing strategies to ensure that our data collection meets the needs of the work that we intend to do.

I would say lastly, Mr. Chair, that it's important that we have people using the system and that they are entering the right information, because the system is only as good as the data that you put into it. And so if we have variations in naming conventions, for example, we need to ensure by way of verification after data entry that the information that's going in is accurate, so that next steps in the process of case management are accurate so that our decisions with respect to policy development and resource allocations are also accurate. I hope that answers your question, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Deputy Minister Ellsworth. Staying on Family Services and the discussion of Matrix management system, on page 13 of the 2025 follow-up on Child and Family Services in Nunavut the report, number 20, it states:

"We found the Department of Family Services launched the new information management system Matrix at the end of November 2023. However, Matrix was not yet being used by all community social service workers to report and manage their work. The department identified that resistance to change and a need for training were barriers to the universal use of Matrix. As a result, Matrix did not include data on all new cases."

So looking for clarification, does that mean it's possible that a foster child could be lost in the

system and not being checked in on a regular basis? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm advised that no, it's not possible. There are checks and balances in place supplemental to the system that would ensure that standards of practice are being adhered to and complied with, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to speak in Inuktitut. On page 10 from the Auditor General and in the middle, the social workers in all of Nunavut, some of the social workers indicated that at times they carry a very heavy load or burden, and in the middle of the week they deal on a daily basis, heavy, heavy loads, some tragic. It is quite hard on the employees. And some of them deal with that on a daily basis.

When they're dealing with heavy loads on a daily basis, what type of support is going to be given to those individuals or those employees? They have to have a positive environment at their work place. What type of support is going to be given to those social workers in their case loads that they deal with in a daily basis? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we identified early on that we need more social workers first. Where there are communities with one social worker, that oftentimes means that they're working sometimes 24-7, responding to the very complex needs of the community. So as a first thought we enhanced the footprint of our social worker complement by some 30 positions, or

more. I think it's 34 in the whole Wellness division.

In addition to ensuring there are more social workers in community to share the work load, one of the actions we immediately undertook was securing a contract with a dedicated counselling service for the social workers. What that means is they have confidential access to counselling at any time. We engage in critical incident debriefing with the support of trained counsellors. They can access the service whenever they like. In addition to that service that's being provided to individuals, we have very open ears during our weekly supervisions that the supervisors and managers undertake to ensure that social workers have access to respite and to rest. We're very flexible, where possible, with time off, and we certainly are working towards, again, enhancing that service to social workers.

As I mentioned yesterday, Mr. Chair, we are, it's the division of Family Wellness. We want to promote family wellness, and in order to do so, I think Wellness needs to live within the people that are providing that service. And so again, how we're hoping to address that and to ensure that there is wellness and rest opportunities and a recognition of the complex files that they are working on, is again ensuring that there's adequate spell-off with additional social workers in community accessing resources that are available to them, and having good management oversight to ensure that the well-being of our staff is at the forefront of what we are doing when we provide services to Nunavummiut who also should be well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. I'm not going to go back to Mr. Simailak at the moment.

I want to remind members that we have a briefing meeting upstairs in the board room in ten minutes, so I'm going to adjourn for the

day, and Mr. Simailak, you can pick your line of questioning up in the morning at 9 a.m. We'll see everyone here at 9 a.m. Thank you.	
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>> *Committee adjourned at 16:17*