Standing Committee on Oversight
of Government Operations
and Public Accounts
Televised Hearing on the Report
of the Auditor General of Canada
to the Legislative Assembly
of Nunavut: 2025 Follow-up
on Child and Family Services in Nunavut
April 29, 2025

Members Present:

George Hickes, Chair Bobby Anavilok Janet Brewster Mary Killiktee Adam Arreak Lightstone Karen Nutarak Craig Simailak

Staff Members:

Siobhan Moss Kooyoo Nooshoota

Interpreters:

Andrew Dialla Attima Hadlari Mary Nashook James Panioyak Jacopoosie Peter Blandina Tulugarjuk

Witnesses:

Peterkin Chakonza, Assistant Deputy Minister,
Department of Human Resources
Nick Clarke, Vice-President, Nunavut Housing
Corporation
Jonathan Ellsworth, Deputy Minister,
Department of Family Services
Anna Fowler, Deputy Minister, Department of
Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs
Matthew Hough, Assistant Deputy Minister,
Infrastructure, Department of
Transportation and Infrastructure Nunavut
Andrew Hayes, Deputy Auditor General of
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James McKenzie, Principal, Office of the Auditor General of Canada

Colby O'Donnell, Director of Child and Family Services, Department of Family Services

Alma Power, Deputy Minister, Department of Human Resources

Jackie Price, President, Nunavut Arctic College Bernadine Rogers, Assistant Deputy Minister, Wellness, Department of Family Services Kyle Seeley, Deputy Minister, Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Nunavut

>>Committee commenced at 13:29

Chairman (Mr. Hickes): Good afternoon, everybody. I would like to open proceedings today. Before us today is Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts. It's a televised hearing on the 2025 follow-up report on Child and Family Services in Nunavut from the Office of the Auditor General. Good afternoon, everyone.

I would like to begin by welcoming everyone to this meeting of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts.

We have convened today to begin the Standing Committee's televised hearing on the Office of the Auditor General's 2025 Follow-up on Child and Family Services in Nunavut.

On behalf of the Standing Committee, I am pleased to formally welcome the Office of the Auditor General of Canada to Iqaluit. I am also pleased to introduce my Standing Committee colleagues:

Bobby Anavilok, Member for Kugluktuk; Janet Brewster, Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa; Mary Killiktee, Member for Uqqummiut; Adam Arreak Lightstone, Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak;

Karen Nutarak, Member for Tununiq;

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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 Ilagiitsiarniq 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 livestreamed 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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In this follow-up audit, we found that the Government of Nunavut took initial steps to address the failures affecting services for children, youth, and families. The Department of Family Services took actions to improve staffing, training, and information management. While these initial actions enable progress, they have yet to meaningfully improve outcomes for vulnerable children, youth, and their families.

Children and youth in Nunavut remain at risk of not receiving the protections that they are entitled to under Nunavut's *Child and Family Services Act*. This is troubling, as we have been reporting this failure for more than a generation.

Substantial work remains to be done to improve outcomes. For example, we still have serious concerns about how the Department of Family Services responds to referrals of suspected child abuse and neglect and how it conducts investigations.

In October 2024, the department presented an 80-item strategic action plan to the Assembly outlining actions intended to enhance protection and support services for children, youth, and families. While the department's strategic action plan is far-reaching, it lacks targets and baselines, clear accountabilities, and specific timelines to measure progress. The department must prioritize its actions that will result in concrete outcomes.

To achieve lasting change, the department must build on the initial actions it has taken. This includes continuing to increase the number of frontline staff and ensuring effective training and supervision, and the consistent use of the new Matrix information system.

While the department has been conducting reviews of facilities supporting children and youth outside the territory, it needs to ensure $\Delta C^{0}b\Delta^{c}$ L⁶dCD Δ^{c} $\Delta \Delta^{0}$ F A^{c} Δ^{c} CF Δ^{c} Δ^{c} PF A^{c} CF Δ^{c} Δ^{c} PF A^{c} CF Δ^{c} Δ^{c} PF $\Delta^{$

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that these reviews are conducted regularly and that findings are acted on.

Protecting the well-being and safety of young people, their families, and their communities is a critical responsibility of any government and a core Inuit value. Therefore, as we did in 2023, we again urge the Government of Nunavut to expedite efforts to protect the territory's vulnerable children and youth.

We remain committed to reporting regularly to the Legislative Assembly on developments in this critical area.

This concludes my opening remarks. We will be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have. *Nakurmiik*. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Hayes. I would like to now invite the Deputy Minister of Family Services Mr. Ellsworth to provide his opening comments. Please proceed.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good day, Committee Chair, members, and Office of the Auditor General officials. My name is Jonathan Ellsworth, Deputy Minister of the Department of Family Services. I am here to provide opening remarks during today's televised hearings on the 2025 Follow-up Report on Child and Family Services in Nunavut.

I am joined by Assistant Deputy Minister of Family Wellness Bernadine Rogers and the Director of Child and Family Services, Colby O'Donnell. I am also joined by colleagues from Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, Human Resources, Transportation and Infrastructure, the Nunavut Housing Corporation, and the Nunavut Arctic College.

I am pleased to report that the Department of Family Services has been working with

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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-ofgovernment 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.

Ilagiitsiarniq 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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momentum continues and root causes are addressed. The department committed to tabling progress reports at each Legislative Sitting. The second Strategic Action Plan progress report, reflecting the latest implementation updates, is expected to be tabled during the Spring Sitting.

Mr. Chair, we know from experience that sustained, whole-of-government change does not happen overnight. But we also know that with a unified approach, strong partnerships, and clear accountability, it is possible. The work we are doing through Ilagiitsiarniq is not about checking boxes – it's about creating a system that truly supports children and families in Nunavut. We are committed to seeing this work through, and we welcome the continued oversight and collaboration of this committee to ensure we get it right.

I'd now like to take this opportunity to highlight several critical areas where the department has made meaningful progress and demonstrated notable improvement.

Mr. Chair, the need for improved child protection practices remains a priority for the department; we acknowledge that we need to do better. We are working hard to review and rewrite all standards of practice. In October 2024, the department made a strategic shift in its approach to standards development and implementation, focusing on producing high-quality, actionable standards that are grounded in practice and reflect Nunavut's unique cultural, geographic, and service delivery context.

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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complex needs of Nunavut's children and families. New director roles, such as Director, Family Wellness-Statutory and Strategic Initiatives, and Director, Family Wellness-Service Delivery, are now in place to provide focused leadership in key areas such as statutory compliance, service quality, and community support. Savings from this restructuring are being reinvested into frontline services, ensuring communities continue to receive the support they need with strong oversight and quality assurance.

Mr. Chair, another key milestone has been the reform of the Family Wellness training program, making it more targeted, role-specific, and responsive to the unique challenges of delivering child and family services in Nunavut. As of April 2025, 89 per cent of Family Wellness staff have completed training on the Matrix Family Wellness Information System, laying a strong foundation for improvements to data collection, case management, and practice compliance.

Our training programs have been reviewed through both a cultural and trauma-informed lens, ensuring that staff are well-equipped to navigate the complex dynamics of delivering services in Nunavut. This focus on cultural competency extends beyond training to the incorporation of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Principles and Inuit Societal Values in all aspects of our work. These values as well as compliance with practice standards are the foundations used to ensure that change happens.

A priority of our recruitment strategy has been to increase Inuit representation in frontline roles that are directly engaged with communities. As a result, all Family Resource Worker positions are now staffed by Nunavut Inuit. This reflects our ongoing commitment to ensuring that our services are culturally

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relevant and responsive to the unique needs of Nunayummiut.

We've made concerted efforts to recruit and retain Community Social Services Workers, with a strong focus on increasing Inuit representation across the department.

Strengthening employment pathways for Inuit graduates of Nunavut Arctic College's Social Services Worker Program is central to this work. We're expanding our collaboration with the college to offer accessible and meaningful career pathways in the Department of Family Services. This includes more mentorships and targeted development opportunities.

Through our engagement with our colleagues at Nunavut Arctic College and meetings with current students enrolled in the Diploma and Bachelor of Social Worker programs, we will develop a pathway for new graduates that will not only provide them with full-time employment but will also provide additional child protection practice supervision while gaining valuable work experience. Establishing a supportive pathway and empowering will make these recruitment efforts successful and sustainable.

We are also working with our colleagues at Human Resources to develop comprehensive action items that will assist us in improving recruitment and retention as well as increasing the rates of Inuit in the roles of community social services workers as well as junior community social services workers.

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

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 multilayer 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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Additionally, we launched the first comprehensive Child Protection Referral Report in February 2025, which tracks the time between referrals and identifies trends across communities, informing targeted prevention strategies. To sustain this progress, we are implementing ongoing monitoring, including regular audits of data accuracy, and developing formal data governance policies to reinforce accountability and ensure compliance with privacy and security standards. These improvements support better decision-making and ensure that children's needs are properly addressed.

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 traumasensitive 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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engaged to assist the committee with the development of a sexual abuse action plan. The revised Agreement is currently moving through the appropriate approval processes. Once finalized, the focus will shift to full implementation, including the prioritization and rollout of related action items.

Our department has made notable advancements in managing placements for children and youth both within and outside the territory. A dedicated team comprising a lead reviewer, a social worker, and a nurse was established in October 2024 to begin facility reviews. As of now, this team has reviewed 15 facilities to date. The reports from these reviews have included recommendations for improvement. While no immediate concerns were identified, the department is actively analyzing the review findings and will work collaboratively with service providers to address the recommendations and support ongoing improvements.

Mr. Chair, in June 2024, we implemented a revised Out-of-Territory Standard. This update has enhanced our ability to monitor and manage out-of-territory placements, ensuring that children and youth placed outside Nunavut are provided with culturally competent and high-quality care. The new standard will allow us to track placements more effectively and respond proactively to any emerging issues.

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.

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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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Mr. Chairman, failure is not an option. All government departments are engaged in efforts to support family services, whether through the prioritization of staff housing, office space, or human resources tools.

I want to express my thanks to the Deputy Minister of Family Services for his leadership in addressing the concerns raised by the Auditor General. He has been tireless in his efforts to create sustainable, transformational change, and lead his department through the implementation of new systems to improve services to young Nunavummiut.

We look forward to answering questions members may have. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Fowler. We'll open the floor to any general comments to the opening comments. Seeing none, the first name I have on my list for questions, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome. I'm happy to see you back and I look forward to a fruitful couple of days.

I know that earlier today and yesterday we asked some questions of government witnesses as well as the Representative for Children and Youth, for which we received responses, and I just want to say that I think it's important to repeat some of the those questions in the context of the discussion with you here today.

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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My question is how often does the Office of the Auditor General conduct regular status updates on audits it conducted in previous years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you for the question. We do try to do regular follow-ups on our audit work. Sometimes they happen informally, where we will go into departments and ask for progress reports on some of the findings, but to do a formal follow-up audit on a topic is not very common for our office.

When we came back in 2023, which is almost ten years after our previous audit on Child and Family Services, we found that many of the issues and concerns, the serious issues and concerns that we found in 2011 and 2014 had not been addressed, and because of that, the Auditor General, Karen Hogan, determined that it was necessary for us to keep our lens on this subject matter. When we're talking about the nature and significance of a topic that could be studied, it's hard to imagine one that's more important than the safety and protection of children. They are the future of our communities.

We determined that we would conduct follow-up audits on a regular basis, this being the first one. And while we rise that it does take time to implement the improvements, we wanted to make sure that the Legislative Assembly had up-to-date information on where the government was acting, what had been done. We expect that our future follow-up audit work will cover outcomes in more detail because by that point in time there will be, there should be more actions that have been taken to improve concrete outcomes for children, youth and families.

In terms of resourcing for this follow-up audit, recognizing that we were looking at

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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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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. Haves: 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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development, program management, and service delivery across areas of government. And we continue to assist in providing this oversight as Family Services endeavours to implement its action plan. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to refer back again today to or this afternoon to the statement released by the premier on May 30, 2023, "Premier responds to Auditor General's reports." The premier stated:

"Our response must be swift with full support of cabinet. The government is unlocking the resources necessary to enable the Department of Family Services, Health, and Human Resources to respond financially and with increased human capacity. The Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, EIA, will establish a Government of Nunavut (GN) audit and support function, and develop a performance and accountability framework. Taking a whole-of-government approach, EIA will provide oversight across departments for services related to the well-being of children, youth, and families."

And specifically on the statement about establishment of a GN audit and support function and developing a performance and accountability framework, can I get an update on that work, please. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Fowler.

Ms. Fowler: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the member for the question. So following the statement that was made, and as we looked to start this work and identifying the scope of responsibilities for this internal audit function, we found that there was a lot of alignment with an existing audit division within the Department of Finance. I alluded to that this Δόλος Δεής Εφαές τορλεντ Δοςς Δεής Εφαάς τορλεντ Διοροσιστος Δι Cdλελος Διοροσιστος Εφοροσιστος Εσοροσιστος Δος Εφοροσιστος Εφοροσιστος Εφοροσιστος Δος Εφοροσιστος Εφορ

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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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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.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

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.

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.

Chairman: Mr. Hayes.

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,

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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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is well informed when it falls on deaf ears? Like, what can we do about that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When we provided the feedback we did identify the importance of having measurable targets, clear accountabilities, timelines, et cetera. I should probably add that, you know, one of the most important things is transparency and informative reporting. It probably is a bit too early to expect that yet, but it should be coming soon from the department, I would imagine. Those are things that we did highlight early on.

I would say that, I acknowledge the fact that the department had multiple consultations that it had to undertake in order to get that strategic action plan completed. I know it took a while, but to do consultation properly it does sometimes take a while. From our perspective, when you are looking at measuring performance in a program, it is imperative to have the foundational pieces, measureable targets, specific and with attribution, so accountability. That's what we were signalling to the department at that point in time.

Where we're at now, where the department's at now, and to us in our audit role, when we're going to be looking at implementation and the way that the department prioritizes, there is likely a different back and forth that can happen at that stage of the game. Asking questions, seeking to understand and providing some perspectives without crossing the line and compromising our independence is something that we're prepared to do moving forward.

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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saying that the offer is always on the table for us to help where we can. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you. You anticipated my next question. I anticipate that when I go to the Department of Family Services with these questions they are going to speak about an implementation plan, and that that's under development. Is it the norm to create an action plan in concert with creating an implementation plan? Does one come before the other, or should they come together? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you. There are definitely a number of ways to get from point A to point B on a strategic framework and an action plan. I suppose that while recognizing the importance of having those foundational documents, it's also important to get down to business, in terms of the implementation. So protecting and increasing the services provided to the children, youth, and families is really why this is being done.

I appreciated the deputy minister's statement at the end when he mentioned that this work is not about structures or strategies, it's about ensuring every child in Nunavut can grow up safe, supported, and strong, and I think on that we agree. So the sooner that concrete actions are prioritized, the better. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chair, I'll go to the Department of Family Services and ask a simple question about why maybe that advice wasn't taken, to create targets base lines, clear accountabilities, and specific timelines to measure progress. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I might be a long little-winded Mr. Chair, because there is a whole nuanced context to this response. I'll start by saying that two weeks prior the release of the Auditor General's report I became the Deputy Minister of Family Services on an interim basis. It was clear that I was directed to address the root causes as an initial step in my tenure, which was originally six months.

Through that lens we know that the root causes were inadequate funding, inadequate staffing, inadequate training, inadequate information management, and inadequate staff safety. So it was our initial object to address those on the broad sense. We knew that we needed to have additional funding. I think the members present as well as the government officials here will agree that when the Department of Family Services separated from Health and Social Services, there wasn't a lot of work undertaken to ensure that the department was adequately funded at that stage, and that was in 2013, which was around the second audit of the Auditor General's office.

As I have stated, we want to do address the root causes as quickly and as efficiently as possible. We started through the three-year forecasting process where we submitted a number of business cases requesting additional allocations for the purposes of staffing, enhancing our allocation footprint, generally speaking, recognizing that the allocation that the department had at the material time wasn't adequate to support change and to develop a strategic plan. So that was the foundation of where we started.

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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The framework was tabled in February of 2024. We then engaged our consultation framework, following which we tabled the Ilagiitsiarniq strategic plan. We're now into evaluation and monitoring, which was tabled in our progress report, and the implementation final document, well, there will be additional progress reports implementation plan, as mentioned in my opening statements, Mr. Chair, will include detailed timelines, priorities, accountabilities, subordinate work plans for specific positions.

To your question, ma'am, the reason why it was designed that way from our perspective is that while we were – and I won't say that we weren't addressing the issues; we weren't just focused on the plan, we were working simultaneously at developing new standards, bringing on competent staff, addressing issues as they arose through the lens of creating better outcomes. But the long-term goal which we feel isn't something, as I mentioned in my statement, that we can achieve overnight, is to create systems and processes that result in better outcomes for Nunavummiut.

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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Ms. Brewster: Thank you. Maybe we can whittle it down a little bit. So this is an 80-item strategic action plan. It's not clear in the plan what are the most important actions and what are less important. There's kind of a little bit of a near future to the far future. And to me, when I'm looking at that, and my job is to help you do your job. I can't figure out what I should be focussing on, in terms of what is the clearest and most present danger to mis-taking action on.

So if we could hear from the Deputy Minister of Family Services, just give us three, maybe the top three actions, targets. I fully understand that this is an immense undertaking, and that it takes the coordination of so many moving targets and so many different resources and I know from memory, one of the biggest concerns is where are the children, how many children are there, where are they. And we were reassured fairly quickly that in fact the Department of Family Services was able to figure out where children are, who they are, and where they are.

And so I would just like to hear the top three priorities right now. Can we whittle it down from 80 action items so that we can help as leaders here, to help us help you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

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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Chairman: Thank you. Now I will go on to the next name I have on my list. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Chair. Thank you again for initiating a follow-up audit so soon. I think it is very appropriate, given the magnitude of the situation. I guess the first question I would like to ask is when will you be conducting your next follow-up audit. Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this point in time I would expect that our next audit will be delivered to the Legislative Assembly, at the earliest at the end of 2026, but most likely in early 2027. So while that does sound like a long way away, that is only 18 months away. At that point in time we will have had the opportunity to dig into the evidence looking for evidence of improved outcomes for children, youth, and families. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you for that response. Given that we have an election months away, I think it's very important to release the next audit as soon as possible so that the next Assembly, the new members of the next Legislative Assembly will be familiar with the situation and will be able to keep tabs on all the departments and the priorities. I'll just make that comment; it would be better if it could be done this time next year, shortly after orientation of the new members.

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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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Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the initial part of the question I would have to get back to the committee on that, and for the second part of the question I believe there are currently 30 vacant social worker positions that will require housing. It's an approximation today, because the housing allocation committee meets every two weeks and that committee has prioritized the allocation of staff housing for Family Services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you for that response. So I guess the next question will be for either I guess the Department of Human Resources as the lead on staff housing allocation. How will the Department of Human Resources work with Family Services and Nunavut Housing Corporation to ensure timely filling of those 30 staff housing requirements? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Power.

Ms. Power: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We work closely with the Family Services over the last two years since this report to ensure that we are prioritizing allocation of staff housing to especially social worker positions. They get top priority to over everybody, nurses, teachers. We have been able to hire 23 social workers in the last two years, of which I think 18 are still in the system. We have streamlined our staffing of these positions into one office as opposed to across four different offices, so we have one staffing consultant who's responsible. We can do mass competitions that are open until filled so that we can continually assess, and candidates coming in as opposed to having set times where a competition is run. We are using LinkedIn and specific advertising on social work specific places.

Our salary review that we conducted last year with a 9 per cent increase actually positioned

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our social workers to some of the highest paid in the country, so that does impact our recruitment of positions. We have been supporting Family Services direct-appointing casual social workers into position and allowing them to stay in staff housing in transient housing, while we await staff housing units becoming available at the community level. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you for that response. My next question will be for Nunavut Housing Corporation. In June 2023 Nunavut Housing Corporation released a press release indicating that 22 modular units purchased from Sackku Innovative Building Solutions to help address such critical needs as staff housing for Department of Family Services. I would like to ask for an update. What is the status of this initiative, and how many of these units were actually transferred over to social workers? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Sorry, my apologies. I was getting some of the titles wrong. Mr. Clarke, go ahead please.

Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the member for the question. Four of those units were originally being brought in and designated for Department of Family Services. I would have to get back to the committee in terms of the status. I believe with one was turned over right away. The remaining three I can commit to getting back at our earliest convenience.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you for that response. I look forward to receiving that information. Now, continuing on the topic of staff housing construction and/or leasing, I guess I'll focus first on construction. The most recent annual

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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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But I will certainly get back to the committee with that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you. Again I look forward to receiving that response. Is Nunavut Housing Corporation utilizing traditional stickbuild methods for these housing units or utilizing alternative construction units such as modular or SIP panel construction? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Primarily the construction would consist of SIP or stick-built construction at this time, but we're certainly not ruling out the option of modular. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Chair. This will be a two-part question for the Nunavut Housing Corporation. When you do provide the data for the construction of staff housing units over the last two years, can you also indicate which are SIP built, and if there are any traditional stick builds; and for the upcoming construction season, given the magnitude of the staff housing requirements across the entire GN, including our social workers, I would highly recommend that the process be expedited. We need staff housing today, and we need lots of staff housing in many communities.

Has the Nunavut Housing Corporation looked into utilizing these alternative construction methods to expedite the process of building and constructing new staff housing units across the territory? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Clarke.

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Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you for that response. Do you know how many communities require cranes to allow for expedited construction of modular staff housing? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Clarke.

Mr. Clarke: I don't have the precise number of communities I'm aware of three communities that do have cranes but we are trying to get as much data or what information and contractors exist in place now that would have that availability. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Chair. I would like to move on now to another matter with regards to Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated. I guess this question will be for the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs. Following the release of the Auditor General's report in 2023, Nunavut Tunngavik issued a press release which stated that NTI's Social and Cultural Development department will continue to research potential opportunities for NTI to become more involved in providing and overseeing prevention services for Inuit children and families.

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Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Fowler, please.

Ms. Fowler: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the member for the question. Maybe I'll start off and I will ask my colleague Mr. Ellsworth to add to what I had to say.

Through our Nunavut partnership committee with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, one of the priority is child welfare. We have established a work plan to oversee some of this work with Nunavut Tunngavik and the original Inuit associations, and some priorities that are closely linked with the work that is being undertaken through the Department of Family Services.

Maybe I'll ask through you, Chair, for Mr. Ellsworth to supplement my response. Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Fowler. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The work with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the regional Inuit organizations is ongoing. As I mentioned, Mr. Chair, in my submission yesterday, the engagement is through the lens of the Katujjikatiginik working group that has been established by political leaders in both organizations. As a starting point, we developed the terms of reference to support the work that we would undertake together to address the gaps in services relevant to child welfare in Nunavut, which include the ongoing development and implementation of the Ilagiitsiarniq strategic plan, together with the discussion around whether or not Inuit

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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 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 to doing that when those decisions are made by the politicians involved. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

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Mr. Lightstone: Thank you for that response. I look forward to updates as they occur.

I would like to move on to your third priority, and that was the data collection. You have mentioned that 89 per cent of staff have utilized gone through the training for this new Matrix case system. In your response to the committee's recommendations last year you had indicated that the standardization or utilization of the new case management software was not across the board. Not all employees were using it. If I recall correctly your response indicated two reasons; one was, I can't recall the exact wording, fear of change, and the other one was a lack of training. Can you give us an update today on the current status of the utilization of the Matrix case management system. Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you Mr. Lightstone. Just for the record, it's resistance to change. You're on the right track. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, when I made those submissions it was clear at the time that the training materials and the design of the training materials and the delivery of it were not necessarily consistent with the needs of community social services workers. We're seeing significant update now, although I will admit if there's only 89 per cent of the staff trained that means 11 per cent require training and will need to come on line.

The resistance to change phenomenon is slowly dissipating, as staff are beginning to see the benefit of having access to data that is reliable and accurate. Mr. Chair, I don't know if Ms. Rogers would like to supplement that response, but that would be my general response. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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.

So I think putting that extra time in and having people at a table with staff while they were learning and having some social workers in the training that could actually talk about, this is how you do an intake, it really helped improve it.

It kind of demonstrates to me that there is this need to embrace that there's old guards that don't want to change, but we are very persistent in improving, and that demonstrates it, I believe. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you. How complex is this new Matrix system and how lengthy is the training? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. I will go back to Ms. Rogers.

Mr. O'Donnell: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's not complex. I haven't had formal training like the five-day training, and you can manoeuvre through it. But I think when you think about the capacity issues and there's crisis coming in, staff have thrown up as kind of a block that it

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isn't a good system. But I think the more that they use it and the more we increase our capacity at the frontline level, it is becoming easier for them, and they are now saying okay, well this works a little better. It's not as hard as what I thought. And the more you use the more the system becomes better, in terms of how you're going to be able to get more bang for your buck, type of thing. But it is a five-day training.

There are some staff that have remedial skills in terms of how to use the system, so we brought them become for additional training. Staff then that we are invested in their training and invested in them doing better, I think, which sends a strong message as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Chair. So my last question will be for the Department of Family Services, and the OAG can respond if they wish. I'm glad that Ms. Power had mentioned the comprehensive salary review, which saw that 9 per cent increase, which which led us to have the highest paid social workers in Canada. But it's my understanding that our social workers also have a much higher case load, work load, and deal with a very wider range of social work. So it's good that we do have the highest paid, but can you talk a little bit about where we sit at the case load and the range or scope of work that our social workers face compared to social workers in other jurisdictions. Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. I would like to go to Mr. O'Donnell on this one. Mr. O'Donnell.

Mr. O'Donnell: Thank you for the question. So I think if I can summarize generally, looking for the comparative case load analysis and understanding the complexities and the broadness of what community social workers

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do across the territory, so it's quite broad and you kind of classify it as a generalist in that framework, where they are focussing on intake, receiving referrals, intakes; there are the case management overseers; there are also the investigation team. They are also the on-call team and they are also the follow-up team. And it continues on.

So in most cases, because communities are smaller and most areas can only have one to two to five social workers or community social service workers, the work loads tend to be shared amongst those, and generally providing the generalist approach to a lot of those services. It definitely has a strain on the workers and it definitely provides a lot more complexity to the cases they work with.

I would say for case loads, when we're trying to do case load analysis, it's challenging to do given the complexity of that and the geographical location, along with the intergenerational contributors, along with the household numbers, it becomes more and more complex as you dive into each case. So to put a number on a case load and what would be appropriate, what would be too much, it would be challenging to do; however, I would just say that every case that comes into the office that community social service workers are involved with are quite complex, and require a number of conversations with interdisciplinary teams because they are all greatly impacted, community leaders and others.

I would say that the work that they do is monumentally different than larger provinces and territories. There are some smaller provinces and territories that would share in that complexity in those case loads, but overall, the work that they do is incredibly complex in dealing with very diverse dynamics within families and trying to maintain support with limited resources at times, as Deputy Minister Ellsworth had highlighted previously. I hope

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that answers the member's question. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you Mr. O'Donnell. Does Mr. McKenzie have a contribution?

Mr. McKenzie: Yes, thank you, Chair. Thank you, Hon. Member, for the question. I think maybe just what I would contribute would be that the development and use of the Matrix case management system will help, I think, in the short and longer term, help better understand some of those questions around case loads. What I mean by that is, so the consistent use of it by frontline staff will be important, consistently using the system, maybe help just in terms of how they manage information, the continuity of the information if people leave, and there is turnover and things of that nature.

But I think there's also a value in terms of how the information in the system is used. One of the things that we would suggest going forward is, and based on some of the discussions that we've had with the department, is being able to use the information in Matrix to help inform decisions around things like staffing and staffing levels. And if there are case loads, if the information in Matrix combined with the referral report that was discussed I believe yesterday, during yesterday's hearing, being able to consolidate and use that information should put the department in a better position to understand the volume of work, if you will, across different communities.

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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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.

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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

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With that, we will take a 15-minute break and return with Ms. Killiktee at the question table. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 15:13 and resumed at 15:30

Chairman: Thank you. I would like to call the committee meeting back to order. Actually before I go on, I have another question for Mr. Clarke. In addition to the information that I had requested earlier, if you could also include how many empty staff housing units there are across the territory, specifically here in Iqaluit. But if you have a community breakdown that would be appreciated.

With that I will go to Ms. Killiktee. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask my questions (interpretation ends) direct to Department of Family Services, or it could also be directed to Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs. The first is: Paragraph 18 of the audit report notes that the Department of Family Services received new funding in Nunavut's 2024-2025 budget, and the recent budget approval process allocated more than \$30 million in additional funding to the department in 2025-2026. To what extent have funding requests for the Family Wellness division been approved or denied over the past two fiscal years? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, over the course of the last two fiscal periods during the course of allocation hearings, I understand we've been allocated approximately 47 million in additional funding, some of which was to respond to the Auditor General's findings; others of which was to

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respond to previously approved business cases relating to income assistance and other service programs in the department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Chairman. Maybe I want to see you sitting there soon.

>>Laughter

Ms. Killiktee: To your response, 30 million in additional funding, you're saying 47 million? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The 47 million is the sum of 2024-25 allocation and 2025-26 allocations, yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for clarifying that. (interpretation ends) And also, what specific analysis of funding and resources needs of the Department of Family Services' Family Wellness Division has been undertaken to address the specific funding issues raised by the Auditor General? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the most recent allocation of \$33.5 million represented a 17 per cent increase to the department's operating budget. Mr. Chair, \$25.9 million is towards the Family Wellness initiatives, to begin the implementation of the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan. Specifically for in- and out-of-territory group home

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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.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. Ms. Killiktee.

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.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

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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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, so 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.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I apologize for using an acronym. I said RFP; I should have said request for proposals, so please accept my apologies.

To the member's questions, thank you, Ms. Killiktee. I think I might want to have Mr. O'Donnell respond to that, given his expert sort of understanding of these facilities and the needs of children who are requiring their use. If you will, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Go ahead, please, Mr. O'Donnell.

Mr. O'Donnell: Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you to the member for the question. So the cost differentials comparatively change from province to province, and generally are set from a provincial standpoint. And when we're utilizing those services, we often have discussions with the provinces and/or territories about what their basic rates are for certain provisions of care and what levels they are. Previously those discussions consistently, I don't think, were taking place, so we can have a properly analysis done on what costs should be, we would be giving. But now, when our partnership has been growing and our communication has been increasing with the communities and territories from an interprovincial lens, we started to look at what that cost looks like per day, for example, or per year, and what we're starting to look at is as to how to reduce those costs and be more in line with the provinces and territories that provide the same services.

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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we can establish for children that are going down at the levels described by the deputy minister previously. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. O'Donnell. Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee: Thank you, Mr. Chair. thank you for your response. And talking about the rates, when was the last time that it was raised or dealt with, with the rates for outside of territory? *Oujannamiik*.

Chairman: Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're all new at this department, relatively speaking. We've all been there about a year and a half on a full-time basis. In my literature review when I arrived at the department, I wasn't able to detect any kind of assessments that had been undertaken at the level that Mr. O'Donnell described. So I don't have an answer for you, ma'am, with respect to whether or not these analyses have been undertaken historically.

I would just supplement Mr. O'Donnell's response with we are currently in the process of updating the [] Child and Family Services Act. In the long term we will present it to the next Assembly. However, in that piece of legislation, through the regulatory framework we hope to establish those rates from a Nunavut context.

And in addition, Mr. Chair, the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Plan also has components that are relative to working in territory to design services so that Nunavummiut can stay in territory and receive the various levels of care that they may require. That's one of the longer-term goals of the plan, but legislative amendments and regulatory updates are required to get us to a place where we can set our own rates. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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Chairman: Thank you. Maybe what might assist Ms. Killiktee as well, Mr. Ellsworth, is how frequently does the department go to put out requests for proposals, and are they nationwide or are they jurisdiction specific? I'm sure the request for proposal package is quite extensive. But just how often is that practice being done and is it nationally or jurisdictionally based? Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would submit that the requests for proposals are issued in conjunction our colleagues at Transportation and Infrastructure Nunavut, previously Community and Government Services, through the lens of their regular advertising. I would tend to believe that it is wide ranging, as wide ranging as it can be to ensure that we have sufficient number of service providers available on the standing offer agreement that would support the necessities of our work in terms of sometimes there are requirements for very rapid placements, based on medical or other needs. but then sometimes there are requirements for sort of longer-term placements.

Directly to your question how often, I would tend to think we would renew it every two or three years, but I would sort of pepper that response with the reality that even if better rates become available, there's some transition matters that we need to be cognizant of for these clients. For example, just because we get a better rate doesn't mean we're going to be wanting to be moving clients every two years. It does not provide for their well-being and it creates unnecessary stress and tension in already vulnerable persons. So that would be my submission, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Killiktee.

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

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strength and again for additional question to this.

(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.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Power.

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.

We have used direct appointments for social work positions to ensure we're keeping people

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in permanent positions. We do the salary review in 2024 that increased our salaries to some of the highest in the country for social work positions, to increase recruitment. We work with Family Services to create 20 new social work positions. We've worked with them to restructure their Family Wellness division to ensure it's structured properly to provide the right service at the community level. I think that's it for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Power. Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

(interpretation ends) To Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, or I think it's going towards the Family Services instead. It's concerning the interpretations, so interpreters, the translators in this area with unilinguals in our communities in Nunavut. What steps and how far is your department at in this area of having Inuit bilinguals hired in this position to have a job as an interpreter-translator in your offices? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I cannot overstate the importance of having Inuktitut-speaking staff at Family Wellness, in all government departments. We strive daily to ensure that Inuit staff are on staff and indeterminant staff. The steps we've taken is that we've enhanced our family resource worker model, which staff are all Inuit, who provide prevention services but also support services to community social services workers.

We also have a number of staff who are clerk interpreters. That is their title. I would have to report back to this committee on the exact number, but I do know, my experience in CL'dd Þ'DNCdlYLYbb. L°a À', CL'db°U <A<>or pacpyLybb. L°a À', CL'db°U'b.

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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 a 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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have no social worker, and I believe one of my constituents has no social worker and the other community that I represent I'm sure will lose their social worker.

What kind of procedures do you have? Do you have any other plans? I'm sure that the staff do not just leave when there's less support in the community, especially when they are social workers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would say that we need to be cautious with respect to procuring translators within the community, just given the confidential nature of the work that we do. I would have to get back to the member with respect to how we're currently undertaking that. In a perfect world I would imagine we would have Inuit social workers who could speak Inuktitut who can provide the service. We're enhancing our footprint with respect to the family resource workers. Certainly the implementation funding that will be coming soon will likely go towards that.

In the meantime I recognize that language can be a barrier, and it's something that we are working to address, and certainly I will come back with a written submission with respect to how it's currently happening.

But I want to assure the committee and Nunavummiut that the Department of Family Services is allocating resources to the front line so that we can ensure that services are available in Inuktitut. We have worked closely with our colleagues at Nunavut Arctic College to define pathways for Inuit social workers to come and work with us. That's the degree level. At the diploma level, through the family resource worker program or other programs, we want to bring them on line, as many as we can, and

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whoever, how many of them want to work with us we will bring on line.

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 its 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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