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Thursday, May 27, 2021

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Iqaluit

Speaker: The Honourable Paul Quassa, MLA

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

Speaker

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(Aggu)

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(Quttiktuq)

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Development and Transportation; Minister
of Human Resources*

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(Amittuq)

Pauloosie Keyootak
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Hon. David Joanasic
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Iqaluit, Nunavut
Thursday, May 27, 2021

Members Present:

Hon. David Akeeagok, Mr. Tony Akoak, Ms. Pat Angnakak, Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak, Hon. George Hickes, Hon. David Joanasie, Mr. Joeline Kaerner, Mr. Pauloosie Keyootak, Hon. Lorne Kusugak, Mr. Adam Lightstone, Mr. John Main, Hon. Margaret Nakashuk, Mr. Patterk Netser, Mr. Calvin Pedersen, Mr. David Qamaniq, Mr. Emiliano Qirngnuq, Hon. Paul Quassa, Mr. Allan Rumbolt, Hon. Joe Savikataaq, Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik, Mr. Craig Simailak, Ms. Cathy Towtongie.

>>*House commenced at 13:30*

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Paul Quassa) (interpretation): Good day. Welcome to the House. Before we proceed, let us pray.

>>*Prayer*

Speaker's Statement

Speaker (interpretation): Good day. Prior to commencing this session, I wish to firstly express appreciation to the members for the fact they are able to take part in this session. Although most of the MLAs are located within your home communities, you are all able to participate, so I would like to first welcome you. I also wish to welcome you all to the opening of our sitting today.

As a consequence of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak in our territory, particularly in Iqaluit, the spring sitting of the Legislative Assembly will be

conducted in a sort of hybrid format. There are some members in their own communities and some are here, but we will be meeting together as one group.

Nunavummiut who are following our proceedings on television, radio, and Internet live stream will note that a number of members are participating remotely from their constituencies.

Canada's federal, provincial and territorial legislatures have all had to make changes to their procedures to adapt to the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in Nunavut we are no different.

Although our Visitors' Gallery remains closed, please know that we are all looking forward to the day when we can once again welcome constituents and guests to the House.

As I noted at the beginning of our recent winter sitting, we explained that the next territorial election is scheduled to be held in October of this year. That date has been fixed and, like most Canadian jurisdictions, Nunavut has a four-year fixed election calendar in place.

The planning for the next election is underway, and I wish to assure Nunavummiut that it is taking into full consideration the need to follow public health guidance and incorporate best practices from provincial and territorial elections that have taken place elsewhere in Canada over the past year.

At the same time it is important to recognize that we live in rapidly changing circumstances, and we have noted that quite succinctly. Now, because of that, the Assembly will be

prepared to take action at the appropriate time if it becomes necessary to adjust the date of the election as a result of the pandemic.

Now, during this most recent influx of the next wave of COVID-19, we have heard many news articles about this pandemic, including families who lost loved ones who have unfortunately passed away here in Nunavut and this included the recent passing of three distinguished Inuit. We remember them.

This past January, Inuit were able to watch television entirely in Inuktitut and this channel became available everywhere, and again that transpired in January. I would like to thank Zacharias Kunuk and his colleagues for starting that enterprising initiative.

At this point, I wish to commemorate these three distinguished Inuit amongst the many Inuit who have passed on, but I wanted to specifically mention these three Inuit.

Firstly, our late elder, Elisapee Ootoova, C.M., of Pond Inlet, was appointed to the Order of Canada in 2002 in recognition of her many contributions to the promotion of Inuit language and culture and for her extensive volunteer work in the community, and we recall that in light of her passing.

Also, our interpreters are challenged to provide linguistic services and although they work hard and will continue to do so, I want to remember some of their colleagues who also provided linguistic services in the capacity of interpreters.

Nick Arnatsiaq, from Igloolik, was an interpreter/translator for many years, and

he was well respected as he also served in the capacity of the Mayor of Igloolik.

Another interpreter we wish to remember is the late Mali Curley, who was one of the first interpreters to contribute to Maliiganik Tukisiiniakvik legal aid clinic in Iqaluit when it was first created, and provided invaluable language services to the clinic. She also was a respected interpreter whose contributions earned her note in the Senate by our territory's Senator. I ask all members to join me in paying tribute to these distinguished individuals.

Additionally, in my role as the Member of the Legislative Assembly representing the constituency of Aggu, I wish to pay tribute to the strength and resiliency of our community's residents during this pandemic. I ask everyone to continue being vigilant. I also want to acknowledge and thank the efforts of our frontline health staff during these unprecedented and challenging times because they are at the frontlines and they are the ones that people see first. They are tireless in their work, so we are extremely grateful to them in this House.

I also wish to take this opportunity to strongly encourage Nunavummiut to listen to the expert advice of our health care professionals. We all want to return to a normal way of life, and getting vaccinated is a critical step to achieving this goal. The vaccine is available in your communities. Please make sure that you get vaccinated because it helps a great deal and we don't want to lose any more relatives.

I myself was very grateful to have been able to receive the vaccine against COVID-19, as I received my second

dose, and many of my colleagues are also vaccinated now, so I thank them.

Before we proceed with the orders of the day, I wish to read the following message that I have received from the Commissioner of Nunavut. I'll read it in English.

Money Message

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut the passage of the following bills during the Second Session of the Fifth Legislative Assembly:

- Bill 69, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 3, 2020-2021*;
- Bill 70, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2021-2022*;
- Bill 71, *Supplementary Appropriation (Capital) Act, No. 1, 2021-2022*; and
- Bill 72, *Interim Appropriation (Capital) Act, 2022-2023*.

Sincerely Eva Aariak, Commissioner of Nunavut.

(interpretation) Those are the main items submitted for your information and I again wish to welcome those who are following the proceedings.

Ministers' Statements. (interpretation ends) Minister of Environment, Mr. Savikataaq.

Item 2: Ministers' Statements

Minister's Statement 621 – 5(2): Remembering Markus Dyck

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the people of Arviat, I say “good day” to you. We will be on TV for the next two weeks.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I stand today to remember our Senior Polar Bear Biologist, Markus Dyck, who died tragically in a helicopter crash on April 25, 2021. The crash occurred near Resolute Bay during the Lancaster Sound polar bear survey. All three of those aboard were lost, including pilot Steven Page and engineer Benton Davie.

Markus was very dedicated and committed to his role in polar bear management and conservation in Nunavut, as well as nationally and internationally. He worked closely with Nunavut Inuit to ensure the long-term sustainability of this important wildlife resource and traditional part of Inuit culture. He was the senior polar bear biologist for more than 10 years with the Department of Environment and was the polar bear technician for the department before that. He was also an instructor for the Environmental Technology Program at Arctic College for several years.

Mr. Speaker, Markus had extensive experience and was highly skilled in the planning and implementation of large-scale research projects with multiple jurisdictions, while also running an effective lab and harvest monitoring program for my department's wildlife research program.

Markus had a unique character and sense of humour that left a lasting impression on everyone who had the privilege to

work with him. He was respected for his experience, vast knowledge, and his colourful and direct approach to life.

This tragedy is an immense loss to the Government of Nunavut, his friends and colleagues, and the international polar bear research community. Markus had a passion for his work like no other.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my condolences to Markus' family, friends, and colleagues, as well as to the family and friends of Steven Page and Benton Davie. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Ministers' Statements. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

**Minister's Statement 622 – 5(2):
Regional Relief and Recovery
Fund**

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I send my sincere regards to the people of Quttiktuq. Some day we will be able to fly up there; I really want to go up there.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, as Members of this Assembly are aware, businesses in Nunavut have continued to be adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the Small Business Support Program, my department also partnered with the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and the Nunavut Community Futures Association to provide the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund to support Nunavut businesses.

Under this partnership, our organizations have signed a \$3,933,000 agreement that will provide Nunavut businesses with access to loans that provide alternative financing options to assist with businesses' operational costs. Eligible Nunavut businesses can access up to \$100,000 in alternative financing in the form of an interest-free, partially forgivable loan.

Funding under this program was made available through the designated Community Futures organizations in each region, namely, the Baffin Business Development Corporation in the Qikiqtaaluk, the Kivalliq Business Development Centre in the Kivalliq, and Kitikmeot Community Futures Incorporated in the Kitikmeot.

This funding continues to be available to support Nunavut businesses in this current fiscal year. For information on this program, applicants may contact the Baffin Business Development Corporation in the Qikiqtaaluk, the Kivalliq Business Development Centre in the Kivalliq, and Kitikmeot Community Futures Incorporated in the Kitikmeot.

I thank my staff and our partners at the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Nunavut Community Futures Association, and our regional Community Futures organizations for their continued support and assistance in delivering these important programs for Nunavut businesses. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Ministers' Statements. Minister of Education, Mr. Joanasie.

**Minister's Statement 623 – 5(2):
Educational Supports for
Nunavummiut during COVID-19**

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good day to the people of Nunavut. Good day to my colleagues, especially the members who are participating online from their communities. I send you my regards.

Mr. Speaker, like most people around the world, the resilience of Nunavummiut has been tested throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. With many schools transitioning between in-class and remote learning, students, families, and educators have shown their strength and determination in the face of this challenge.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education has supported students, families, and educators by prioritizing health and well-being in everyday learning. My department has created recovery learning resources and tool kits for school staff to support the transition to and from remote learning, while addressing students' mental and emotional well-being.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the pandemic, my department implemented health and safety measures for our schools that continue to be effective. My department will continue to update information sent to schools to reflect the latest public health guidelines provided by the Department of Health as we go into the next school year.

My department launched the online platform Edsby as an additional tool to support students who are learning at home. We purchased 5,000 Internet-ready digital devices and developed a guide for parents to support their child's remote learning. It is my department's priority to provide students, families, and educators with the necessary tools to thrive during these difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, for over a year, Nunavummiut have been dealing with the COVID pandemic. Our lives have changed in many ways. I want to recognize all Nunavummiut for their efforts in keeping our education system strong. It is only with your continued support that we will achieve the best possible future for our children and youth. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Ministers' Statements. Minister of Culture and Heritage, Ms. Nakashuk.

**Minister's Statement 624 – 5(2):
Recognition of Translation Bureau
during COVID-19 Pandemic**

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, my colleagues. I also say "good day" to the people of Pangnirtung.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the critical work of our Translation Bureau staff at the Department of Culture and Heritage. Workplaces physically shut down, including Government of Nunavut departments and agencies, but the need for

translations remained and the requests for urgent translations increased significantly. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2019, the Translation Bureau staff completed translations of over 2.2 million words related to COVID 19. A significant number of those requests were received after regular office hours.

Mr. Speaker, interpreters and translators are the vital communications link between the Government of Nunavut and Nunavummiut. Providing critical information to Nunavummiut in Inuktitut and French is no easy task and requires dedication, passion, and hard work. I ask all members in this House to join me in thanking our territory's interpreters and translators. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Ministers' Statements. Before we proceed further, I wish to inform our colleagues who are joining us from their home communities that we are experiencing technical problems, which is normally the case with computers. The ministers' statements are being sent from this House. I want to inform our colleagues of that.

Continuing on. Members' Statements.
Member for Netsilik, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Item 3: Members' Statements

Member's Statement 878 – 5(2): Marine Management

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say "good day" to everyone, those who are in Iqaluit as well as those who are joining us online.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a statement about the environment adjacent to our communities as I have made previous statements about concerns regarding the dead whale carcasses that we found landed on the coast of Pelly Bay. With the current situation facing us, it is causing problems to our livelihood as Inuit since our diet consists primarily of marine mammals and it forms most of our diet, although we supplement it on occasion or sometimes we can only have store-bought foods.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that subsisting only on healthy wildlife without any sicknesses is how Inuit can have healthy diets, as animals also go through various cycles with some specimens becoming sick and others dying of natural causes. In those cases, when it causes degradation, it can become problematic.

Mr. Speaker, our ancestors had known for millennia as it was passed on to us as youth and young people even unto this day, knowledge that we pass on to our children and grandchildren and which we preserve for our descendants. This consists of knowledge of our environment needing to be healthy which results in both healthy Inuit and a healthy environment.

Mr. Speaker, I will have further comments on this matter when we reach the appropriate section as I will have questions on this subject. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Member Main.

Member's Statement 879 – 5(2): Birth of Daughter

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good day, my colleagues. I'm glad that there are other members joining me online.

Mr. Speaker, I have an announcement to make from my family, from myself and from my wife. Last month on April 20 we had a daughter, which we are very happy about. I wanted to share with the members that we named her Maeve Janice Joan in English and Arnahungaaq in Inuktitut. When she was born in Iqaluit, I was so happy that my heart almost burst, and my heart grew so much when my wife announced that we had a daughter. I would like to thank the staff at the Qikiqtani General Hospital, the nurses, the doctors, and also the health care professionals in my community of Arviat.

I don't want to forget to acknowledge the people of Iqaluit. We had to go into (interpretation ends) isolation (interpretation) right after the birth and I would like to thank the people of Iqaluit for welcoming and supporting us throughout the whole ordeal. I share my gratitude with them and also my constituents in Arviat and Whale Cove.

Mr. Speaker, being a Member of the Legislative Assembly is hard work, but you also have to remember that it's an even bigger task when it comes to family, to be a good parent and to be a good father. I will look to my colleagues for advice on how to be a good father and will keep my ears open at all times. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Member's Statement 880 – 5(2): COVID-19 Outbreak in Iqaluit

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *Ullukkut*, good day to all members, ministers, and Nunavummiut who are following our proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community. As the House is very much aware, the current outbreak in Iqaluit began on April 15, exactly six weeks ago today. The past few weeks have not been easy. Iqalummiut have had to significantly adjust our way of living to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, seven days ago was my son's fourth birthday. Unfortunately this was his second lockdown birthday in a row. I'm beginning to believe that he doesn't remember the last time he had a real birthday, so I would like to take this moment to ask everyone to join me in wishing Aiden Ukaliannuk Lightstone a happy birthday.

>>Applause

Thank you. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, six weeks of working to reduce the spread has given me a new lockdown look, some of which isn't exactly visible on screen.

>>Laughter

I have promised my wife that I will shave it off to celebrate when we have reached the end of this outbreak and

Iqaluit is declared COVID-free. Since I have now said it in the House, I guess that makes it a formal commitment.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very encouraged by the lower numbers of active cases which we have seen recently. However, in order for us to return to life that's a bit more normal, we must remain diligent and abide by the measures set out by our incredibly hard-working chief public health officer.

I want to take a moment to express my appreciation to Iqalumiut who are working hard and making sacrifices in their lives to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Thank you to everyone who is juggling the impossible task of simultaneously playing the roles of teacher, parent, and employee.

I would like to say "thank you" to everyone who is staying at home and missing much-needed time with family and friends both near and far. Thank you to everyone who is being responsible and remaining diligent and following the public health measures.

Mr. Speaker, I have a few more comments. I would like to request unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. The member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are none. Please proceed, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, members.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts that Nunavut students have made

to continue learning during this difficult time. Our students have been greatly affected by this pandemic, they've had to study from home, and that has presented huge challenges. Our students have persevered and have put great effort into doing the best they can to succeed during this trying academic year.

I would also like to acknowledge the Department of Education and especially our teachers who have put in such tremendous effort to help our students continue their studies.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Minister of Health as well as all of the frontline care workers. I know they are working tirelessly to provide the help and care and the services that we need. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for us all, but I know our continued efforts will help us contain the virus.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the global pandemic is far from over. Although significant progress has been made in respect to vaccination rollouts and other measures, there is still a long way to go.

As MLAs, we have the responsibility to raise issues and questions concerning the government's response to the pandemic, and I look forward to productive discussions in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me today in expressing our support for the entire community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Member for Aivilik, Mr. Netser.

**Member's Statement 881 – 5(2):
Congratulations to Coral
Harbour's First Lawyer: Suzy
Aggiq McKitrick**

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Can you hear me now? It appears that you can hear me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to acknowledge Markus, whom our Premier mentioned, and I won't forget him. I worked with Markus when I was a minister and it was a great experience to be working with him. Our thoughts and hearts are with those he left behind.

Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to recognize and congratulate Coral Harbour's first lawyer, Suzy Aggiq McKitrick. We are very proud of her. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, Suzy recently graduated from the Nunavut Law Program in Iqaluit. The law program was delivered by Nunavut Arctic College in partnership with University of Saskatchewan College of Law.

Mr. Speaker, Suzy's hard work and dedication to her studies has paid off as she has been awarded her Juris Doctor degree in law. In the past, Suzy has worked for the Department of Family Services in her hometown. With her knowledge and experience, Suzy is now able to engage actively in the legal profession.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating on her success. (interpretation) We are proud of her.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Thank you.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Member for Hudson Bay, Mr. Rumbolt.

**Member's Statement 882 – 5(2):
Congratulations to Nunavut Arctic
College Graduates**

Mr. Rumbolt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to the people of Nunavut and all members present.

Mr. Speaker, I am always very pleased to be able to rise in the House to congratulate my constituents who have worked hard to further their education and expand their personal opportunities for the future.

Today I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the five graduates who successfully completed year one of Nunavut Arctic College's Administration program in Sanikiluaq. The participants were:

- Louisa Oqaituq
- Paul Amagoalik
- Mina Kavik
- Lucy Ann Novalinga
- Christine Kudluarok

Mr. Speaker, the graduation ceremonies were held just last month. However, COVID-related restrictions meant that there were no friends, families, or guest representatives to celebrate with them as they received their certificates. I am very glad that I am able to recognize their achievements.

Mr. Speaker, the graduates all plan to return to their studies for year two of the program to earn their diploma, which will hopefully be delivered in the fall of 2022. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Member for Iqaluit-Niaqunngu, Ms. Angnakak.

**Member's Statement 883 – 5(2):
Impact of COVID-19 Coronavirus**

Ms. Angnakak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to speak about COVID-19. First of all, I welcome everyone.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, today I, too, would like to say a few words regarding the impact of COVID-19 across Nunavut.

To begin with, Mr. Speaker, I feel that we are extremely fortunate to have been living in Nunavut during this pandemic. The level of leadership and overall management in dealing with the COVID outbreaks has been very good. I have been impressed with how our community of Iqaluit and the communities across our territory have handled themselves during these pressing times.

It has been heartening to see the additional financial support from the federal and territorial governments, as well as the Inuit associations, and at times even from the general public for families who need this kind of assistance. In response, I have heard Nunavummiut express their gratitude for this support.

Mr. Speaker, people are also grateful that everyone who wanted the vaccine and was eligible was able to get one in a timely manner. Yes, COVID has been hard on all of us, but there is a silver lining to everything, or so I have been told. One benefit from the current situation is that families have been able to spend more time together, with many able to do more fishing, hunting, and camping than ever before.

Mr. Speaker, I do realize that not everyone has a family to spend time with. There are lonely and isolated people in communities with lockdown restrictions. However, the COVID pandemic has also brought the mental health needs of Nunavut and all Canadians to the forefront. There has been an increase in the availability of mental health workers who can be reached over the telephone or on social media.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to request that I can conclude my statement.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) The member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude her statement. Are there any nays? There are none. You can proceed, Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my colleagues.

I have witnessed random acts of kindness from people or even strangers who reach out to those who are lonely, afraid, or hungry during these times of need.

Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 virus is nothing to laugh about. It can cause

serious illness and will easily spread if we don't follow the rules put in place to help us stay safe and healthy. We are making progress in bringing down the numbers of infections in Iqaluit, and we can all do our part to keep up this trend by continuing to follow the rules set out by Dr. Patterson and his staff. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Member for Tununiq, Mr. Qamaniq.

**Member's Statement 884 – 5(2):
Passing of Elisapee Ootoova**

Mr. Qamaniq (interpretation): I say "good day" to the residents of my community, my colleagues, and Nunavummiut.

(interpretation ends) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to talk today about the recent passing of one of my most distinguished constituents, Elisapee Ootoova. Mr. Speaker, all of Pond Inlet is in mourning at her passing.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, Elisapee received a significant number of awards and recognitions for her many contributions to the community and the territory.

In 2002 she was named to the Order of Canada. The official citation for her appointment noted that:

"For over 30 years, Elisapee Ootoova has been committed to helping the community of Pond Inlet adapt to changes to their traditional society. She has an extensive record of voluntary

service in areas such as education, health care, counselling and restorative justice where her leadership and encouragement have been of great benefit. Also highly regarded as a language specialist, she is the co-author of an encyclopedia of Inuit traditional knowledge and an Inuktitut dictionary. She is a role model for all those seeking to preserve and reinforce Inuit heritage and culture within a modern society."

Mr. Speaker, I was very proud to have known the late Elisapee Ootoova, and I want to conclude by saying that her contributions will be with us for many years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towtongie.

**Member's Statement 885 – 5(2):
Impact on Health Services during
COVID-19**

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Can you hear me now? Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You can hear me? I think you can hear me now.

I wish to make a statement today on a topic that I will have questions on at the appropriate time regarding the smaller communities and the timetables for implementing the vaccine visitations and whether plans are already in place.

>>No audio

Mr. Speaker, can you hear me now?

>>No audio

Speaker (interpretation): My apologies. Member Towtongie is no longer audible, so we will continue with the other members, but we will try to get back to her if it is possible for us to do so.

Members' Statements. Member for Amittuq, Mr. Kaernerck.

**Member's Statement 886 – 5(2):
COVID-19 Vaccinations**

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good day, members and ministers.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make a statement with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in an outbreak here in Iqaluit.

Once the outbreak occurred in Iqaluit, many services were immediately suspended or ceased to be offered in my constituency and in particular, medical travel and appointments that were to be done here in Iqaluit. This was due to their concerns about the spread of the COVID-19 virus outwards to other communities, and although I initially held that same concern and was reticent to travel down, the need to properly represent my constituents overrode my fears and further, I wanted to see the ministers face to face when I questioned them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I too want to ask about the status today with regard to medical patients in terms of the appropriate numbers or figures of our elders, our pregnant women, who were impacted constituents since the outbreak of this pandemic. Specifically, how many residents of Amittuq were forced to postpone or defer their travel or

appointments due to the pandemic outbreak?

I will have questions on this at the appropriate time as I too have no desire to place any constituent at risk. With that being the case, I will have questions to the Minister of Health on the current status on this issue which I will raise today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Before we proceed, we will again try the Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Can you hear me now, Mr. Speaker? Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I will ask some questions about the coronavirus situation. Is it still not working? Can you hear me, Mr. Speaker?

I will have questions about the coronavirus and the smaller communities. I would like to know when the second dose of the vaccination will be available to them. I will want to know if there are plans to do vaccinations for the smaller communities in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. For members especially in the communities, we can hear you when you're speaking. You don't need to keep asking if we can hear you.

Members' Statements. Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa, Ms. Sheutiapik.

**Member's Statement 887 – 5(2):
Mental Health Impacts of COVID-19**

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik

(interpretation): Good afternoon. It's great for us to be here again.

(interpretation ends) Maybe if I start; last session I did my winks. Today I start with Speaker, John, and your team for the hard work you have done to make this a reality for this session to continue, so winks to you.

I'll start by saying that I'm glad to be here. It was great to hear talks of new life and talks of some of the mental challenges because of COVID. Mental health has a huge impact on any even stable person. It's evident during COVID. I say that because unfortunately today and yesterday were terrible milestones for me. Yesterday was my sister's anniversary, and today unfortunately is the anniversary three years that there's a murder/suicide in our community, unfortunately by my nephew.

Mental health is a huge concern, discussion, and it should not be just COVID related. It's ongoing every day. I felt it important to mention this mention this because as I struggle with the early anniversaries, I'm thinking about all those families in Nunavut. In the last five years we have lost a lot of lives. In Iqaluit alone, there were three murder/suicides, then other murders; many. That is many lives that are impacted.

Post-traumatic stress triggers people at different times, and as a country in the world, they're celebrating Black Lives Matter because of an unfortunate life lost

last year to Mr. Floyd. I think, as a territory, we should be doing just as much for our families that lose; the survivors of the victims.

As I struggle mentally because, you know, as we talk about great family gatherings during COVID; two days of families lost to violence. I speak candidly and I will continue to do so in hopes that beautiful people like us sitting here that are trying to make a difference will hopefully make a difference in the near future. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Member for Gjoa Haven, Mr. Akoak.

**Member's Statement 888 – 5(2):
COVID-19 Public Health
Measures**

Mr. Akoak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to all the MLAs that are attending the meeting through long distance. Today I look like a coach for a certain team.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to say a big "thank you" to the people of Gjoa Haven. They have been following the COVID guidelines very well and I am very grateful to all of them because it is very visible since most people are wearing masks at the stores.

Although most people feel these masks are uncomfortable to wear, they wear them since they want to follow the guidelines listed. There are some people who disregard these rules, but the vast majority of our people follow these guidelines, so I am very appreciative of

their dedication and I want to thank them publicly. We have to work together as a society.

I also wish to thank our dedicated nursing personnel, who are taking good care of us that non-Inuit call (interpretation ends) nurses (interpretation) in case the interpreters don't understand what I mean by our health caregivers. We are very appreciative of your dedication and hard work in looking after our residents. They seem tireless in providing these necessary health services.

As MLAs, we are asked to follow guidelines as well and also be good examples. Let us listen to what we are asked to follow. I say a big "thank you" to everyone and also to the people of Gjoa Haven who are listening to and watching our spring sitting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>> *Applause*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Before we proceed, I would like to welcome Member Keyootak. He hasn't sat with us for a very long time and he is back. Please feel very welcome.

>> *Applause*

Members' Statements. Member for Quttiktuq, Mr. Akeegok. My apologies. It seemed like he rose to speak, but that wasn't the case. Members' Statements. Member for Rankin Inlet South, Mr. Kusugak.

**Member's Statement 889 – 5(2):
Successful Spring Activities in
Rankin Inlet**

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Good afternoon. Thank you. (interpretation ends) Welcome back to the Assembly, my friend. (interpretation) That makes me happy.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my fellow residents of Rankin Inlet. It seems like COVID is the only topic we are talking about, although there are a lot of other things being done. The people of Rankin Inlet are always listening and following the guidelines that they have to follow. They have had to follow more guidelines because Rankin Inlet is a hub for transportation from the south for the Kivalliq, so I thank them for always listening and following the guidelines.

Though that is the case, I would like to thank the people of Rankin Inlet for holding Pakallak Tyme. Though this was happening, they held Pakallak Tyme with snowmobile races as well as all sorts of other activities, and everybody was fine. It is great that they helped people with recreational activities in the community and I thank them.

Last week they had a fishing derby and I was kind of envious. I don't go out in Iqaluit, so I think I'm the only un-tanned person in Nunavut, or me along with the Speaker.

>> *Laughter*

Though we try to be outside, we don't have adequate transportation.

I just want to thank everyone as well as the stores, departments, and groups that do things that bring people together, and all the stores and departments that provide ice augers and other fishing

gear. I know that they will be doing that again when the time comes. I envy them and I would like to thank them as well, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. The people of Nunavut are experiencing a great spring. Thank you. Members' Statements. I have no more names on my list. Oh, I'm sorry. Member for South Baffin, Mr. Joanasie.

**Member's Statement 890 – 5(2):
Outdoor Hockey Rink in Kinngait**

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps you mistook me for the other Davidee, as there are two Davidees here.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today... Well, maybe first of all, we heard that there are no more active cases of COVID in Kinngait. I'm pleased with that and I hope it stays that way.

However, I would like to rise not about COVID, but this past winter in Kinngait the arena was not able to be open all winter, but it didn't stop our young people from playing hockey.

Mr. Speaker, we understood that the shovel is very important. There were four individuals who started the whole thing and they shovelled a lake because they wanted to play hockey. They began doing that in Kinngait in March and they worked on it daily. It ended up affecting the community a great deal. There have been a lot of requests to use that lake, so that ran very well.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank them and express my pride to the young people who started this on their own. They are Andy Saggiatok, Novualia Adla, Isaiah Nungutsuituq, that's my nephew, and Ethan Manning. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure these four youth had the help of others.

Afterwards they started getting sponsorships from businesses. They had a little bulldozer or little snow remover machine that they were able to use on the lake. I am very glad that they were able to bring out this really good thing and the fire department was able to pour water on the rink so that it could be smooth and used for hockey. I would like to thank all of them and their parents and their friends. I'm sure they're all proud of them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. Member for Cambridge Bay, Ms. Ehaloak.

**Member's Statement 891 – 5(2):
Recognition of Emily Angulalik**

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Good afternoon to all of my colleagues and it's good to be back, and to all Nunavummiut and especially my constituents in Cambridge Bay.

(interpretation) Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to recognize a person from Cambridge Bay. (interpretation ends) I would like to congratulate and personally recognize one of my constituents, Emily Angulalik, who recently received the 2021 Indspire Award which is an honour indigenous

communities bestow upon its own people for culture, heritage and spirituality awards.

Language and culture are fundamental components of Emily's identity. She has 20 years' experience as a teacher and is a cultural ambassador. Mr. Speaker, she has dedicated her time to educating others in Inuinnaqtun. Please help me in congratulating Ms. Emily Angulalik. (interpretation) Thank you.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members' Statements. I think I finally have no more names on my list. Continuing on. Oral Questions. Member for Netsilik, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Item 6: Oral Questions

Question 1287 – 5(2): Marine Management

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Environment concerning the issue of our marine environment.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister will recall, I have raised concerns on a number of occasions about an incident that occurred last year in my constituency of Netsilik that involved the death of a number of bowhead whales.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister will be aware, information published by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board indicates that another incident took place last month near the community of Taloyoak. The published information indicates that this is the 11th bowhead

whale carcass reported in the Gulf of Boothia since October 2020.

Can the minister clarify how his department is involved in investigating these incidents? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Before the minister responds, I just want to inform members that I have skipped items 4 and 5. I'm sure you noticed that, but I skipped them as there was nothing listed for those items. I'm sure that we will do the orders of the day properly tomorrow.

Minister of Environment, Mr. Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I very clearly recall the times the member brought up the issue of dead bowhead whale carcasses found around the Kugaaruk area.

I have no new information with regard to the dead bowhead whales, but they believe that their deaths were caused by killer whales, and the fact that there was another incident with the death of a bowhead near the community of Taloyoak which was most likely killed by killer whales. The number of killer whales continues to increase within Nunavut and they will probably kill more bowhead whales as a result.

The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans is responsible for the ocean and the bowheads that died. We do work together with them on the subject of marine mammals, but at the moment I have no new information on the cause of death of the bowhead whales.

To add further, if anyone in Nunavut finds an animal that appears to have been ill or has died from no apparent cause, please inform the wildlife office and they will take samples to send for analysis and hopefully gain more information on what could have caused the illness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even though there is no new information, I would like to ask this supplementary question. I will ask it in English for clarity. (interpretation ends) When I last raised this issue in the Legislative Assembly, I asked the minister to clarify how his department is working with the Nunavut Marine Council to address issues related to the safety of our marine environment. Can the minister provide an update today on this work? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Environment, Mr. Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have any updates for the member on that front too, but we do work with the marine council to make sure that our waterways are safe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Qirngnuq.

Mr. Qirngnuq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) When I last raised this issue in the

Legislative Assembly, the minister informed me that he had been in discussions with the federal government to address issues related to the marine environment and infrastructure. Can he provide an update today on this issue? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Environment, Mr. Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The update I can give might be a little different, but we are working with the federal government through the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework to try to build up infrastructure and other needs that are needed within our territory. If I have any new updates for the member, I will let him know. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 1288 – 5(2): Medical Travel to Manitoba

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, as Kivalliq residents who are sent down to Manitoba on medical travel for surgery or for follow-up, it is concerning at this time because COVID is rampant in that province.

We have heard on the news that in Manitoba, the health department is currently going through a severe shortage of (interpretation ends) intensive care unit beds (interpretation) and also a shortage of nurses and doctors

because of the high number of people who have COVID. Also, surgeries have been delayed within the entire province, and the Province of Manitoba has sent about (interpretation ends) two dozen (interpretation) Manitobans to Ontario or other provinces because of their severe shortage of intensive care unit beds.

With this being of concern to the people of the Kivalliq, my question for the minister is: in looking at the COVID situation in Manitoba, what alternative practices are they using with regard to patients who have to be sent to Manitoba? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for asking that question. Mr. Speaker, with COVID arriving in our territory, people who are sick and people who need to be seen are continually assessed to determine who needs to be sent out immediately, who can be assessed within the territory, what can and can't be postponed. This is still continuing in the Kivalliq.

With the high number of COVID patients in Manitoba, our Department of Health, who is responsible for patients who are required to travel to Manitoba, ensures patients are assessed individually. Once a person is assessed, they determine whether they have to be sent out of the territory or if they can be cared for in their community. We make sure that individuals are properly assessed before deciding whether they are going to send the patient out of the territory or not, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. Yes, I think it's very important that we make sure that we set our priorities regarding patient travel. Well, that's from my understanding and what the minister stated is clearly understandable, but there are emergency cases that arise suddenly and unexpectedly, as we all know.

My question for the minister is: if there is an emergency case in the Kivalliq region involving a resident of Arviat, for example, and a medevac is required to send the patient out of the territory, does the Department of Health have a plan in place to use an alternative location besides Manitoba, either to Saskatchewan or Ontario? Does the Department of Health have such a plan? Mr. Speaker, that's my question. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we are prepared to do that. If there is an emergency situation, we decide where it would be best to send that patient out of the territory so that the individual can be properly cared for in a timely manner. This is continually monitored. If they can't go to Winnipeg, we look at other provinces where they can take immediate care depending on the circumstances. We do look at alternatives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. My final question is: have you sent individuals to other places outside of Manitoba from the Kivalliq region in cases of an emergency? Can the minister indicate if patients have been sent to Ontario or Saskatchewan? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have in-depth information on whether a patient or patients have been sent outside to other provinces rather than Winnipeg in the event of emergencies. I don't have that information at this time, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Amittuq, Mr. Kaernek.

Question 1289 – 5(2): Impacts on Medical Travel from COVID-19

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to get used to my mask.

>>*Laughter*

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Health. COVID is not the only topic of discussion, but it has shown to be dangerous.

My first question to the minister is if he has the figures. Using the Amittuq area as an example, Sanirajak and Igloodik, has any medical travel been cancelled since COVID-19 first appeared in Iqaluit? Are there any figures as to how many medical travel appointments were cancelled? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for those questions on that subject. Mr. Speaker, I know many people scheduled for medical travel had their travel deferred or appointments postponed in southern locations. I know there were some cancellations, but I don't have the numbers offhand as to exactly how many patients had their travel called here in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Kaernek.

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously numbers are not available due to travel restrictions.

Now, with respect to the figures we received earlier today, no new cases have been reported, as I believe there is a total of 22 cases here in Iqaluit. Now I wonder, when patients were at the Tammaativvik Boarding Home during the pandemic, were they tested for COVID-19 or not? Were patients arriving into Iqaluit tested prior to their approved travel or is that test done when the patient returns home? At which point

does the COVID-19 testing occur?
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you.
Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issues surrounding travel delays due to COVID are too numerous to detail out. However, I do know that here in Iqaluit, the local capacity to conduct more testing has increased to a point where many swabs that initially were sent south for testing are now processed here and this includes many of the diagnostic imaging and blood samples being checked for particulates or antibodies. Many tests are now processed here and we no longer need to send samples out for testing.

With respect to the city of Iqaluit and specifically for patients at the boarding home, if any patient suffers distress or illness due to COVID and if their sickness is easily diagnosed, then testing is done to determine if they have the virus or not, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you.
Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Kaernek.

Mr. Kaernek (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, indeed. What I now want to understand pertains to the Chief Medical Officer of Nunavut, Dr. Patterson. He provided a listing of recommended medical procedures to follow that was distributed to the communities. When he instituted a lockdown in Iqaluit last month, I had to be in isolation for several weeks to protect my community, although my household was impacted.

Have improvements been made to this process that medical travel patients still have to adhere to regarding isolation periods? Can I be the only one forced to isolate when I return home and have my family members be allowed freedom or have new practices been implemented in the last few weeks by the Department of Health? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you.
(interpretation ends) Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Mr. Speaker, the rules in place are still in effect. Those who are leaving from Iqaluit to their communities are told to isolate for at least two weeks and not to go to any public places. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you.
Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Question 1290 – 5(2): Local Employment in the Airline Sector

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation and are regarding local employment in the airline sector.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister will recall, I raised concerns back in November of last year about the issue of Nunavut's overreliance on rotational cargo workers in the airline sector, especially during the pandemic.

At that time I noted concerns that these workers were not required to go through the mandatory 14-day isolation period before entering the territory, and I noted

that many of these jobs can and should be filled by local residents.

Mr. Speaker, lo and behold, at the onset of the outbreak in Iqaluit, cargo shipments were ground to a halt because the cargo workers were on mandatory isolation.

My first question for the minister is this: does the government share my concern about this issue, yes or no? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Any business or any activities that are taking place in Nunavut, we highly encourage them that they do hire local and that they do hire Inuit as much as they can. That's the stance that this government has taken and it includes our own government taking that initiative too. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Your first supplementary question, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister. I also highly encourage businesses to hire local whenever possible.

Mr. Speaker, Canadian North is currently advertising up to nine full-time cargo attendant positions here in Iqaluit. Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed to note that the airline is continuing to target southern hiring for these positions by providing transient housing and advertising these positions as rotational

positions that come into the community on a three-week on, three-week off basis.

Can the minister indicate what discussions his department has had with the airline and with Transport Canada to identify practical and specific ways that our government can help encourage more local employment with the airline by assisting local applicants in obtaining their airport restricted area identity cards in accordance with the federal Airport Restricted Area Access Clearance Program, which continues to be one of the more significant, if not the only, barrier to hiring locally in the cargo area? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, those discussions between the airlines and Transport Canada continue and it continues to evolve. There has to be a fine balance between safety of the airport and the airside and the workers in terms of how to continue to address that. That's something that is ongoing and will continue to be ongoing, as we need to balance it on all fronts, and if there are any barriers, these barriers do get highlighted and try to get some resolutions around that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his response. I do hope that those discussions will come to fruition and we

will hopefully likely see government intervention in assisting local Iqalumiut with that restricted access pass.

Mr. Speaker, moving on to my final question, the Government of Nunavut has provided millions of dollars in direct funding to keep Canadian North flying during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I believe that it's fair to say that we have some leverage when it comes to what terms and conditions are set for this funding.

I would like to ask: can the minister clarify what requirements, if any, are currently in place in respect to Inuit and local employment at the airline? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This agreement that we have in response to COVID for the three airlines, our main objective is to keep those airlines going to our communities. That is our road system and it's our only way in and out of any of our communities at the moment and so that has been our main priority.

On regular, non-COVID days, there are strict terms and conditions that we have through our contracts for medical and duty travel, which includes Inuit content, but for the purpose of this COVID related, our main priority is to keep our transportation system flowing and that has been our top priority and it will continue to be.

When and if this pandemic is over, those terms and conditions that are pretty strict to both of the airlines that have our contract will go back into those discussions and those terms will be expected to be followed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Baker Lake, Mr. Simailak.

Question 1291 – 5(2): Impact of COVID-19 on the Mining Industry

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to Baker Lake to my office here.

Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, who is the Minister responsible for Mines.

Mr. Speaker, we have been living with COVID-19 for over a year. One of the most significant economic impacts of the pandemic has been on our territory's mining industry, which employs a significant number of Nunavummiut.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister is very much aware, many of my constituents in Baker Lake are employed by Agnico Eagle. The company recently announced that:

“In Nunavut, the vaccination campaign is well advanced and discussions are underway with local authorities to discuss the reintegration of the Nunavut-based workforce. The Company is in the process of establishing a reintegration plan taking into account logistics, testing and health protocols, as well as training plans required to ensure a smooth and

safe reintegration. No timeline for reintegration has been set at the time of this news release.”

Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents have been asking me since I assumed the role of MLA: when will we go back to work at the mine? I have been trying to answer their questions as best I could, but we haven't been able to get the answers we need yet. It's not the Government of Nunavut's fault; we all know that.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister describe today what specific actions his department is taking to work with the company to get our residents safely back to work at the mines? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not just our department, but with great assistance from our chief public health officer and his office, we're working really hard to go through the plans that have been laid by the mining company and also our input in terms of how to keep our communities safe and how we can integrate it. This work is ongoing and it continues to evolve. We are dealing with a pandemic and when an outbreak happens in a community, it becomes basically our main top priority.

Some of this wonderful work that has been going doesn't seem like it's moving, but there are staff that are working really hard to try to get that plan into the implementation phase and this involves a lot of people and a lot of

organizations. From our government, there is more than one department that is involved in this and I just want to assure our workers that we are trying our best to try to integrate it back into the workforce, but in some cases we have community outbreaks that then become our main priority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his response. Mr. Speaker, Agnico Eagle has also announced that, and again I quote:

“In the first quarter of 2021, the Company's Nunavut-based workforce remained at home due to current COVID-19 health guidelines issued by the Government of Nunavut and the Company continued to pay 75% of the base salaries to these employees (a total of \$4.1 million pre-tax...)”

Mr. Speaker, I know that workers appreciate this commitment, but the situation cannot last indefinitely. Although public sector employees have been largely protected from the worst economic impacts of the pandemic, people employed in the natural resources sector are worried about their jobs and their futures. What message does the Government of Nunavut have for them today? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I applaud the companies that are paying their employees to stay home while this pandemic is happening.

The key message here that I would like to do is as part of this back-to-work, it has a strong emphasis on the vaccination program, not just for community members but for the southern workers too. The discussion has been: how do we integrate that? Through this vaccination program, if the miners from our communities and the miners from the south are there, that's one of the key components. I applaud our government and the Department of Health for providing those vaccination programs, and we have been very good and some of the discussions are to include some of the transient work, such as our mines, but those are all in discussions.

Until our chief medical officer is comfortable, he will authorize certain orders to do the integration, but I rely heavily and trust our chief medical officer on making these sound decisions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have faith in our chief public health officer. He and his team have done an amazing job for the past year and a bit since we got COVID, the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering: can the minister clarify what federal support and assistance has been provided to help the mining sector during this challenging,

unprecedented time? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There hasn't been any real direct federal relief or that towards the operating mines. They have been able to do that within their own for that.

If and when anybody gets out of a job, they could apply for the... .
(interpretation) I apologize to the interpreter, (interpretation ends) but the abbreviation, CERB program. I can't spell that out right now, but that's a federal program when they are out of work that they are able to get those benefits.

Currently the two major mines that are in Nunavut are paying our Nunavummiut their salaries to stay home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Tununig, Mr. Qamaniq.

Question 1292 – 5(2): RCMP Body-worn Cameras Pilot Project

Mr. Qamaniq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Justice.

As the minister is aware, I had the honour of participating last year in a roundtable organized by Nunavut's Senator on the subject of introducing body-worn cameras for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This

roundtable brought together a wide range of stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday of this week, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police issued an announcement concerning this pilot project. It stated that:

“Nunavut RCMP would like to remind residents that the Body-Worn Camera Pilot will be moving to an evaluation phase. On June 1, 2021, the Iqaluit RCMP officers will no longer be equipped with body-worn cameras (BWC).

(...) With the evaluation phase approaching, the Nunavut RCMP plan to share the results of the body-worn camera pilot publicly.”

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm whether or not his department was consulted on this decision? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. I'm sure that when the member looks in the work plan, he will see that there is a full presentation being offered by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for all members next week.

In direct answer to the member's question, there has been ongoing dialogue with the RCMP and the Department of Justice on this body-worn camera pilot program. In fact I just spoke to Minister Blair this morning, thanking him for allowing Nunavut to be the pilot test jurisdiction and encouraged

that when it does get implemented nationwide, we look very positively towards a body-worn camera initiative to be implemented in Nunavut. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Qamaniq.

Mr. Qamaniq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his answer. Mr. Speaker, I support the expansion of this pilot project to smaller communities, including my constituency of Pond Inlet. Will the minister commit to working with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to identify Pond Inlet as a future community for this initiative? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a perfect world, I would like to see body-worn cameras in all communities, and hopefully the technology will allow us to do that through the procurement process that the Government of Canada is currently engaging in on the technology of the cameras themselves, so absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Qamaniq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his response. Does the minister have a timeline as to how long this evaluation will take, Mr. Speaker? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As they're just wrapping up the pilot program here in Iqaluit, it's going to take some time to go over the footage and the editing and literally hundreds of hours of footage. I don't have a timeline on how long it's going to take to complete the evaluation, but I will keep members informed as I get informed by my officials with the Department of Justice and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Niaqunngu, Ms. Angnakak.

Question 1293 – 5(2): Labour Standards Legislation

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Justice and they concern the issue of labour standards legislation.

As the minister will recall, the Legislative Assembly recently passed amendments to the *Labour Standards Act* that provide for public emergency leave and family abuse leave.

New *COVID-19 Public Emergency Leave Regulations* were recently published in the *Nunavut Gazette*.

Can the minister update the Legislative Assembly today on the extent to which Nunavummiut have been utilizing these new entitlements? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We just brought in this legislation in September of just last fall, so we're talking six or seven months ago. I haven't had a chance to go over any of the statistics or information on this program as of yet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the minister knows that we look forward to that information in the near future, perhaps before our terms are up.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister is aware, a number of Canadian jurisdictions have recently passed legislation to mandate entitlements to paid sick leave for workers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Speaker, I believe that this would benefit employees and employers here in Nunavut, especially in communities like Iqaluit where there is more private sector employment and we need to do everything we can to minimize the spread of the virus.

I note that the president of NTI has recently called on the government to address this issue. Can the minister confirm when will he be introducing further amendments to the *Labour Standards Act* to address this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to supplement my previous response, there is still work being done on the regulations on the *Labour Standards Act*, so although it is in force, it's not fully implemented yet.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to other jurisdictions and changes to their *Labour Standards Act*, those were all short-term amendments to their legislation with end dates. I believe the majority of them are ending this September, so a short-term fix to a problem that is more impactful in other areas. As the member mentioned, here in Iqaluit there is a lot more private industry and private employment opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, if we were to put legislation forward, it wouldn't be available until September, which, realistically, the light at the end of the tunnel is going to be occurring in the next few months as vaccination numbers increase, as restrictions get eased, as there is less opportunity for COVID-19 to be impacted in our communities. At this time I'm not looking at bringing forward temporary legislation that may be outdated by the time it gets tabled in the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's just hope that we don't have any more pandemics where it will have to be addressed.

It is also my understanding that at least one other Canadian jurisdiction has addressed this issue by providing a rebate to businesses so that they can afford to provide paid sick leave to their workers. Can the minister indicate what discussions he has had with employers and other stakeholders on this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Justice, Mr. Hickes.

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have those direct links all the time to numerous industries that are impacted by COVID. I will commit to speaking with my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, to see if there have been concerns brought to his attention that would warrant a further look at it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Aivilik, Mr. Netser.

Question 1294 – 5(2): Status of Sakku School Tender

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Education today.

Now, as residents of Coral Harbour, we have patiently awaited the much-needed improvements to our local school, and further, I noted the rather large amount of funding set aside by the Department of Education towards our school improvements. They travel to our community via charters to consult and meet with our local representatives on

what the residents wish to see and how our school will be constructed.

They worked quite closely with the local representatives and bodies, so I was anticipating, along with my fellow residents, that improvements would commence in the upcoming summer construction season, and further, in March, the government issued the (interpretation ends) tender on March 2 (interpretation) and the tendering process closed on April 13, 2021. I recently sent him correspondence regarding that matter approximately two weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, we were just informed today that the contract was cancelled, and I wonder why it was cancelled. We were highly anticipating the commencement of the construction of our school, so we would like to know what the reasons are for the cancellation. As residents of Coral Harbour, we really want to understand the reasoning for the cancellation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Education, Mr. Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the Member for Aivilik for his question. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education had their capital project funding approved this past fall and the design phase funding was also approved therein.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the tender, we did indeed open that process in March and it closed on April 13, 2021. There was only one bidder on the project. We had set aside \$27 million for these improvements to the Sakku School. However, the sole bidder

submitted a tender proposal of over \$55 million for improvements listed for that particular school. For that reason, we had to contemplate our options and withdrew this tender to determine how we could deal with this contract.

Nonetheless, we have not given up on these proposed improvements to the Sakku School because they are required, but we need to be innovative in determining how to best move forward with our plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Netsier.

Mr. Netsier (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for clarifying that. Although we would prefer to have a new school built, I am glad that the minister has indicated that he will make sure that something is done about the Sakku School. What types of plans is the Department of Education looking at with regard to improvements that need to be made to our schools? I did note that that was not my last question, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. That is my question.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Education, Minister Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are currently looking at several options as to how we should proceed with the renovations of the Sakku School. We have looked at whether we should be building a brand-new school or renovating and improving the current school, as well as how we can best

utilize the monies we had set aside for that school. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. This is now your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Netser.

Mr. Netser (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my final supplementary question.

The district education authority and the hamlet council are kept informed of the progress of this project, so we are thankful, but my final question to the minister is: are they planning to renovate the school or build a completely new school? We want to ensure the district education authority, hamlet, and myself are kept informed of the progress. Can the minister agree to that? I went to that school when I was young and there is an urgent need to do something about improving the school. Can the minister agree to that? That's my last question, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Education, Mr. Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have requested to meet with my colleague and the district education authority about this project and look at how we can move it forward. Yes, I agree to hold a meeting with the district education authority and the hamlet council so that we can give them an update about the plans for the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Niaqunngu, Ms. Angnakak.

Question 1295 – 5(2): Status of Collective Bargaining

Ms. Angnakak (interpretation): Wonderful. Thank you. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Human Resources and they concern the status of the collective bargaining.

Mr. Speaker, when I recently raised this issue in the Legislative Assembly, the Minister of Finance stated that the Department of Human Resources is now the government's lead on this issue. As the minister is well aware, the GN's collective agreement with the Nunavut Employees Union expired in September 2018, over two and a half years ago.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to frontline staff who have been working long hours over the past year to deliver essential programs and services to our constituents during the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, the NEU has recently called on its membership to contact each and every Member of the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to go back to the bargaining table and negotiate in good faith. Can the minister clearly tell us today: when will this happen? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is attempting to negotiate in good faith and I would like the Nunavut Employees Union to go back to the table. There is one that the Nunavut Employees Union has filed a statement of claim through the Nunavut

Court of Justice that is saying that we are negotiating in bad faith and we disagree with that. It is before the courts on that, but that should not stop these ongoing negotiations and I would encourage both our collective bargaining negotiators and the Nunavut Employees Union to go back to the table. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Your first supplementary question, Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is confusing when you're not directly involved and you're wondering what's going on when I hear the minister's response and then when you see the union's response.

Mr. Speaker, the Nunavut Employees Union has publicly stated that the GN recently rejected a recommendation to resolve the current situation by going into binding arbitration. Can the minister clearly explain to us today the government's reasons for this decision? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult to have a discussion when they are right in the middle of bargaining negotiations and I have full faith with our bargaining negotiators and in terms of what should go into this new agreement, along with a very good partner, from my perspective, the Nunavut Employees Union. These two have to come to terms. Those are the negotiating boundaries.

I don't want to make any suggestions that are outside of this. This has been an ongoing practice with our collective bargaining in terms of how it gets negotiated, and I would encourage both our party and the NEU to go back and discuss any of those terms. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Your second and final supplementary question, Ms. Angnakak.

Ms. Angnakak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had no explanation whatsoever from the minister what the government's reasons for not... Well, he didn't really clearly explain the reasons for not going to binding arbitration, so it's something I will be revisiting. There just seems to be, I don't know, a part of the puzzle missing here as to what's going on.

As the minister is well aware, the GN's collective agreement with the Nunavut Teachers Association expires on June 30, 2021, that's just over a month from now, and the Qulliq Energy Corporation's collective agreement with the Nunavut Employees Union expired on December 31, 2020. That's almost six months ago now. Can the minister indicate where things stand with respect to these negotiations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Mr. Speaker, arbitration is one tool, but both parties have to agree. From our perspective, I still see that there is room to negotiate

for this agreement with the Nunavut Employees Union and I stand firm to see that agreement being negotiated in good faith by both parties.

As for the Nunavut Teachers Association and for Qulliq, both parties, including our government, have exchanged saying that we are prepared to negotiate for the new collective agreements. The formalities of saying “Yes, this agreement is about to expire and this agreement has expired, here is our negotiating team,” I have sent that off to both of the two unions and that triggers a new wave of negotiations.

I think this is the first time where we see three of our unions being negotiated all at the same time. We hope and anticipated that the NEU collective agreement would have been done by now, as you indicated and as we all want to see, but it’s in this situation right now. As a government we’re prepared to negotiate for all three collective agreements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members will note... . Mr. Kaerner.

Motion 113 – 5(2): Extension of Question Period

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Rule 39(7), I move, seconded by the Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, that the time for question period be extended. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. The motion is in order and is not subject to debate. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried and question

period is extended by an additional 30 minutes.

Oral Questions. Member for Rankin Inlet and Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towntongie.

Question 1296 – 5(2): COVID-19 Vaccine for Chesterfield Inlet

Ms. Towntongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Health.

I recently received a letter from Chesterfield Inlet regarding their concerns about the availability of the vaccine in their community. Many residents are deeply concerned about COVID and want to know when the vaccinations would begin in Chesterfield Inlet.

The letter states that many Inuit are still waiting for their first shot and second shot, but no schedule or time has been identified for the community of Chesterfield Inlet. Furthermore, when residents have called their local health centre, they are informed that health centre staff is also uninformed as to the timing of the next round of vaccines.

Now, I wonder if the Department of Health and the responsible minister can provide information on when the COVID vaccine will be made available in the smaller communities, and this includes the vaccination round for Chesterfield Inlet and when they would be made available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusagak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, it may be that those residents who called in previously called at the wrong time, hence not being informed about the next round.

However, based on the information I have received, all communities have vaccines available locally for the first shot, and when enough residents identify their wish to receive a vaccine shot, then the vaccine clinic is opened. Actually, that is when they would open up one of the vials as the vaccine becomes ineffective when it is at room temperature, at least according to the information I have. All communities have vaccines available, enough to inoculate all residents wanting the shot, or at least a minimum number of residents. That is how it is run throughout Nunavut, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister. However, many of us wanted further clarification based on the news stories about the age limit of certain vaccines, such as the vaccine for children 12 and older. Now, many parents are deeply concerned that when their children are being inoculated, whether it requires parental approval. Does this include parental approval prior to the vaccine being available for their child? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Mr. Speaker, I want to state unequivocally that nobody under the age of 12 will be vaccinated, as that vaccine is for 12 years old up to the age of 18, and children become eligible for the vaccine shot at age 12. The vaccines specific for youth are clearly identified as the Pfizer vaccine that is set to arrive here in Nunavut. Once it arrives, youth aged 12 and older will be able to get shots, but the cut-off age is 18, so the youngest age to receive a shot would be 12.

Based on the residents wanting a vaccine shot and our health policies, the parents have to approve this medical procedure, but there is no requirement at this time. However, we still need to provide the information to the parents about this vaccine, so we will do that once the vaccine is readily available and outline the procedures on how our youth will receive these shots and how the process will be laid out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for that clarification. If parents are listening to the proceedings, they now clearly understand that their children aged 12 and older will be able to get this vaccine shot.

Now, with respect to the smaller community I represent, they actually asked via their letter if rules could be clearly outlined in the upcoming months specific to our smaller communities that will clearly identify their dates for

vaccines both for local youth and residents as they want a clear timeline of when the vaccines are available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank my colleague for that line of questioning as it will provide some clarification. I am appreciative of your line of questioning.

Yes, as an example, we identified the fact we would be conducting a vaccine tour initially when it first became available, and we will be following this same process to provide the additional vaccines for our youth. Mr. Speaker, it looks like we will require charters to go to the communities. It will depend on the requirements of this Pfizer vaccine, as it will be quite important to have proper storage, and the hours are very limited in terms of thawing out the vaccine and then using it within the hours when it is most effective.

Due to the short time frame of effectiveness, there will be rules in place and the first communities closest to the centres will determine how the process will play out, up to the point where we can provide clear directions and rules on this vaccination initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Uqqummiut, Mr. Keyootak.

Question 1297 – 5(2): Hiring Process for Principals

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good day, my colleagues. It has been a long time since I have asked a question. My first question is for the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, concerns have been raised in my other constituency community. Principals sometimes go through difficult times. Can the Minister of Education indicate how principals are selected? How is that process conducted? That is my first question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Education, Mr. Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for that question. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education's regional school operations offices work with the local district education authorities to determine the application process for the principal position as it includes an interview process. The selection committees to choose principals can also include parents or teachers. That's the process that is used, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Keyootak.

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is there any training provided to teachers so that they can become principals in Nunavut schools? Is there any training or are there any programs in this area? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Education, Mr. Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for this question. Mr. Speaker, no. When teachers have an interest in becoming a school principal, they can be provided with training opportunities. Any teacher can apply to become a principal and, to say this in English, (interpretation ends) the Certificate in Educational Leadership in Nunavut, (interpretation) they can receive training through that program to improve their qualifications for the job. Those opportunities are made available, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Keyootak.

Mr. Keyootak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for that clarification. Can the minister clarify: for those who wish to become employed as principals, are locals made a priority? For example, before anyone outside of Nunavut applies for a job, are Nunavut residents made a priority? Sometimes we are recruiting from outside of Nunavut, both within Canada and outside of Canada. I have been told that these are concerns. Do you make Nunavut residents a priority first or are you prioritizing Canada-wide first in hiring principals? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Education, Mr. Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, priority is given within Nunavut. For example, I

can state that (interpretation ends) priority 1 (interpretation) is assigned to residents of Nunavut, to beneficiaries, and to applicants that have qualifications. These are all factors that are considered and given first priority when positions become available. Although this may be the case, we occasionally have to look outside of Nunavut due to the shortage of teachers or other staff such as principals, but priority will be given to Nunavut residents who are qualified for those positions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. I have no more names on my list. Continuing on. Written Questions. Going back to Item 6. I apologize. Oral Questions. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Question 1298 – 5(2): Hiring of Civil Servants during COVID-19

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me again. I have a question for the Minister of Human Resources at this time.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard all sorts of interesting issues, especially in the role of an MLA, from individuals on different topics. I recently heard about a government news release that I want to confirm with the minister that the Department of Human Resources has put in a hiring freeze. I would like to ask the minister if this is the case right now. Can the minister clarify that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, there has not been any kind of process to freeze hiring and as an example, to state it as he said, there is no hiring freeze. However, there are positions that need to be advertised which are still undergoing final details at this time, as we are trying to correct previous editions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I guess I'll just ask the minister in terms of an update and in terms of the hiring processes. If there is no hiring freeze currently in place, have there been any delays or holdups to the hiring process in the recent months regarding COVID-19 restrictions or staff housing restrictions? Has there been anything that has slowed down the hiring process in the past few months? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for clarifying on the question. Yes, there are a number of activities that are taking place at the senior level in terms of looking at our staff housing stock and the number of vacancies and the number of advertisements that have been taking place and will continue to take place. There is no freeze. It's taking stock of what's there now and trying to determine which one of these are priorities in terms of moving forward.

We are at a critical milestone where staff housing is very low at this time, but it is something that I am confident that my department and all government departments will find a solution for very soon and that advertising those positions will be going back into the system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Main.

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) Can the minister elaborate further on what he just mentioned in terms of senior management activities and taking stock of staff housing availability? He mentioned advertisements being rolled out. Can the minister maybe just clarify a bit for the House in terms of what this "taking stock" activity actually is within the Department of Human Resources? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everybody appreciates, there is a very high vacancy rate within all of our departments. In some cases, some of the requests are high in terms of wanting to put it out for competition, whether it is with staff housing or without. With all of that combined, it has given the senior management an opportunity to say, "Okay, how are we going to deal with this?" and working very closely with all departments in terms of trying to prioritize the number of vacancies. That's what is happening.

COVID-19 does have some impacts on this, but I want to assure our public service that in terms of putting competitions back into our pool, it is forthcoming. With this, senior management needed to have a very strong look because we are in dire straits when it comes to staff housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Gjoa Haven, Mr. Akoak.

Question 1299 – 5(2): 14-day Isolation Rules

Mr. Akoak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My questions are for the Minister of Health. When the ministers speak, they tend to be believed more if they respond properly to questions.

My question is directed to the Minister of Health. Kitikmeot and Gjoa Haven medical patients are sent to Yellowknife and Edmonton. The question I wanted to ask is, once they are returning back to the community, they have to do 14 days of isolation. Some of them follow the guidelines very well and pass the 14 days of isolation, but some of them break the rules. If they break the rules that they are supposed to follow, do they have to restart the 14 days of isolation? I hope I was understandable. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): I would like to thank my colleague for asking for clarification. To respond to that very briefly, yes, that is the practice in place. They have to go through

isolation for 14 days once they're returning from the south, whether it is from Edmonton or Yellowknife, on their way back to Nunavut. They first have to go through isolation for 14 days and they have to follow all the guidelines that they are told to follow.

I know it's very difficult and it gets very hard to be alone for a long period of time, but the guidelines have to be followed. I have seen where some people were almost going to be done, they were going to be leaving the next day, but they broke the guidelines and then they had to restart the isolation period from day one. Some of them have even had to restart their isolation more than once.

Nunavummiut should be following these guidelines because isolation is very important. Although we want people to come home as soon as possible, they should try to complete their entire isolation period, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you, minister. If a person breaks these guidelines numerous times, will the government keep paying for the continuous isolation or will that person have to pay for their own isolation if they break the guidelines numerous times? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would prefer not to have people pay for their isolation. Many people go through medical travel and it's very difficult on the finances when you have to go there. We try to make sure that it doesn't come to a point where they have to pay for their own isolation. They get counselled at the isolation hubs and the staff members speak to them to make sure that they don't break the rules.

Mr. Speaker, if anything needs to be corrected at the isolation hubs or if a person is breaking the guidelines, we try to work with those individuals to make sure that they don't end up having to pay for their own isolation and to get back home to Nunavut as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Akoak.

Mr. Akoak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you, minister, for that clarification. My last question is regarding medical travel patients who have completed the 14-day isolation period and then are returning home to their communities. The question I get asked and would also like to ask is: once they are home, do they have to isolate for another 14 days in their home community? I hope I was understandable. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Health, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Mr. Speaker, thank you for asking that

question. I'll try to clarify it as there are different circumstances concerning isolation.

Some of them go through hospitals in the south and they use personal protective equipment and go to the hospital wearing the personal protection equipment. Once they get out of the medical appointment, they can come home sooner, but not all patients can go through that expedited service. Once patients return home, they have to perform their own home isolation. They have to self-monitor to make sure that they don't have any symptoms.

Some individuals will be allowed to come home from hospitals in the south and return to their community without performing the 14-day isolation, but this is rare and only done with a very good reason. Once the chief medical officer approves the early return, for example, if there is a death in the family or if that person is critical or may die soon, they can come home sooner. There are caveats. They are told that they are not supposed to go out into the public and cannot have visitors. There are circumstances like that.

Nonetheless, once medical patients pass the two-week isolation period, they're free and on their own and they're not isolated or quarantined anymore. Those are the ones who successfully pass the 14-day isolation period. I hope that came across clearly, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. Member for Amittuq, Member Kaernerik.

Question 1300 – 5(2): Status of Capital Projects during COVID-19

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me again. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I'm going to direct my question to the community and government services minister in regard to the government projects that were approved.

I would just like to know how many of the government's projects have been cancelled due to the pandemic as of now. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister of Community and Government Services, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question. Currently there are no projects that have been cancelled within our Government of Nunavut capital infrastructure projects. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your first supplementary question, Mr. Kaerner.

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) It's nice to know that there are no government projects that have been cancelled. What would happen if there were any postponements or cancellations for approved government projects? What would the impact be if there were any cancellations for this summer's projects? (interpretation) That is my final question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Community and Government Services, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Because of COVID there has been a lot of talk across North America regarding construction costs. None of our government projects right now have been cancelled, but there are situations where some projects might get affected budget-wise. We are keeping on top of what's going on within southern Canada, and within our projects, we are making sure and always on high alert as to what would happen to our projects if they got cancelled, but I can assure you right now that there are no projects that have been cancelled. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Your second and final supplementary question, Mr. Kaerner.

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was my last one, but it raises another question.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, let me try to rephrase my question. Were there any postponed government projects Nunavut-wide rather than cancellation? Were there any postponements for upcoming summer projects between cancellations and postponements? Are there any postponements with the government projects that were approved for this fiscal year? (interpretation) That will be my final question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Laughter*

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Minister of Community and Government Services, Ms. Ehaloak.

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) As Minister of Community and Government Services, I'm not aware of any projects that have been postponed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members, the time for question period has expired. Let us proceed to Item 7. Written Questions. Item 8. Returns to Written Questions. (interpretation ends) Mr. Clerk.

Item 8: Returns to Written Questions

Return to Written Question 083 – 5(2): Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement in Principle

Clerk (Mr. Quirke): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling the Return to Written Question No. 83 that was filed during the 2021 winter sitting of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Returns to Written Questions. Replies to Opening Address. (interpretation) No. 10. (interpretation ends) Petitions. (interpretation) No. 11. Responses to Petitions. No. 12. (interpretation ends) Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Item 12: Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters

Committee Report 037 – 5(2): Bill 57, Tobacco and Smoking Act

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I wish to report that Bill 57, *Tobacco and Smoking Act*, has been reviewed by the Standing Committee on Legislation and that the bill is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, I seek consent to have Bill 57 placed on the order paper for Friday, May 28, 2021. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) The member is requesting consent to allow for Bill 57 to be placed on the order paper for Friday, May 28. Do members agree?

Some Members: Agreed.

Speaker: There is an agreement and hence, Bill 57 is referred to the Committee of the Whole for Friday, May 28.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. (interpretation) Continuing on. No. 13. (interpretation ends) Tabling of Documents.

Item 13: Tabling of Documents

Tabled Document 389 – 5(2): 2019-2020 Annual Report of the Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut

Members, I am tabling the 2019-2020 Annual Report of the Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut. (interpretation) Thank you.

*See Appendix for full text of Return to Written Question 83 – 5(2).

(interpretation ends) Tabling of Documents. (interpretation) Continuing on. No. 14. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Item 14: Notices of Motions

Motion 114 – 5(2): Extended Sitting Hours and Days – Notice

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I give notice that on Monday, May 31, I will move the following motion:

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

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will ask that my motion be read today. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Notices of Motions. (interpretation) No. 15. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. Minister of Finance, Mr. Hickes.

Item 15: Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills

Bill 69 – Supplementary Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, No. 3, 2020-2021 – Notice

Bill 70 – Supplementary Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2021-2022 – Notice

Bill 71 – Supplementary Appropriation (Capital) Act, No. 1, 2021-2022 – Notice

Bill 72 – Interim Appropriation (Capital) Act, 2022-2023 – Notice

Hon. George Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, May 28, 2021, the following bills will be read for the first time:

- Bill 69, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 3, 2020-2021*;
- Bill 70, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2021-2022*;
- Bill 71, *Supplementary Appropriation (Capital) Act, No. 1, 2021-2022*; and
- Bill 72, *Interim Appropriation (Capital) Act, 2022-2023*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. (interpretation) Continuing on. No. 16. (interpretation ends) Motions. Member for Arviat North-Whale Cove, Mr. Main.

Item 16: Motions

Mr. Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I seek unanimous consent to deal with my

motion today. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. The member is seeking unanimous consent to deal with his motion today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Please proceed, Mr. Main.

Motion 114 – 5(2): Extended Sitting Hours and Days

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

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

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

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

Motions. (interpretation) Continuing on. No. 17. (interpretation ends) First Reading of Bills. 18. Second Reading of Bills. 19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. There are no items in Committee of the Whole for today. (interpretation) As there are no items in Committee of the Whole, there is no report to be made under Item 20 and so we go to Item 21. Third Reading of Bills. No. 22.

(interpretation ends) *Orders of the Day*. Mr. Clerk.

Item 22: Orders of the Day

Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A reminder that the Standing Committee on Legislation meets tomorrow at 10:30 Eastern Standard Time.

Orders of the Day for May 28:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Responses to Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motions
15. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 69
 - Bill 70

- Bill 71
- Bill 72

18. Second Reading of Bills

19. Consideration in Committee of
the Whole of Bills and Other
Matters

- Bill 57

20. Report of the Committee of the
Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

22. Orders of the Day

Thank you.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you.
(interpretation ends) In accordance to the
authority provided to me by Motion 114
– 5(2), this House stands adjourned until
Friday, May 28, at 2 p.m. Eastern
Daylight Time.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House adjourned at 16:14*

Appendix – May 27, 2021



Return to Written Question

Asked by: John Main, MLA
Arviat North-Whale Cove

Asked of: Honourable Joe Savikataaq, MLA
Arviat South
Minister of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs
Premier of Nunavut

Number: # 83-5 (2)

Date: March 16, 2021

Subject: Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement in Principle

Question:

1. With respect to the Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement in Principle that was signed on August 15, 2019:
 - a. What is the current status of implementation of the provisions contained in each of the fourteen Chapters and two Schedules of the Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement in Principle?
 - b. What is the current status of negotiations between the Parties in respect to a Final Devolution Agreement?
 - c. What is the current status of the Government of Nunavut's Request for Proposals for an Implementation Service Provider for the Transitional Human Resources Development Strategy (RFP 2020-63)?

Response:

- a. The Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement in Principle (AIP) sets out the framework for the final Devolution Agreement currently being negotiated between the Government of Canada, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and the Government of Nunavut. While the AIP is not legally binding, it serves to inform and guide the negotiations as the final Devolution Agreement is drafted. While this 'road map' is used in support of negotiations, the implementation phase of the devolution process will follow the signing of the final agreement. Respecting the confidential nature of the negotiation process, it can be reported that as of March 17, 2021, all the chapters and schedules contained in the AIP are being considered in the Parties' work to negotiate the final agreement's chapters and schedules. This work is underway and progressing.
- b. While respecting the confidential nature of the negotiation process, it can be reported that as of March 17, 2021, negotiations between the Parties are underway and progressing. The Chief Negotiators have been meeting throughout the COVID 19 pandemic and officials have been carrying out support activities on working groups through teleconferences, email, and videoconferencing.
- c. As of March 17, 2021, the Government of Nunavut's Request for Proposals for an Implementation Service Provider for the Transitional Human Resources Development Strategy is in the final stages of the procurement process. The forthcoming outcome of this process will be made public upon its completion.