



Nunavut Canada

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NUNAVUT

4th Session

2nd Assembly

HANSARD

Official Report

DAY 26

Monday, September 17, 2007

Pages 1738 – 1751

Iqaluit

Speaker: The Honourable James Arreak, M.L.A.

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

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(Pangnirtung)

Chair, Management and Services Board

Tagak Curley

(Rankin Inlet North)

Striking Committee

Keith Peterson

(Cambridge Bay)

Striking Committee

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(Nattilik)

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Hon. Olayuk Akesuk

(South Baffin)

Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation

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(Amittuq)

Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth; Minister of Human Resources

James Arvaluk

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Levi Barnabas

(Quttiktuq)

Chair, Full Caucus; Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole

Hon. Paul Okalik

(Iqaluit West)

Premier; Minister of Justice; Minister of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs

Hunter Tootoo

(Iqaluit Centre)

Striking Committee

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(Rankin Inlet South – Whale Cove)

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Hansard Production

Innirvik Support Services

Box 1200

Iqaluit, Nunavut, X0A 0H0

Tel (867) 975-5000 Fax (867) 975-5190 Toll-Free (877) 334-7266

Website: www.assembly.nu.ca

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Opening Prayer..... | 1738 |
| Notices of Motions | 1738 |
| Motions..... | 1739 |
| Orders of the Day | 1750 |

A.

Daily References

Monday, September 17, 2007..... 1738

B.

Motions

017 – 2(4): Censure of the Premier – Notice (Peterson) 1738

018 – 2(4): Extended Adjournment – Notice (Tootoo) 1738

017 – 2(4): Censure of the Premier (Peterson) 1739

018 – 2(4): Extended Adjournment (Tootoo) 1749

019 – 2(4): Adjournment for the Day (Evyagotailak) 1749

**Iqaluit, Nunavut
Monday, September 17, 2007**

Members Present:

Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Honourable Olayuk Akesuk, Mr. James Arreak, Mr. James Arvaluk, Mr. Levi Barnabas, Honourable Levinia Brown, Mr. Tagak Curley, Mr. Joe Allen Evyagotailak, Mr. Peter Kattuk, Mr. Steve Mapsalak, Honourable Patterk Netser, Honourable Paul Okalik, Mr. Keith Peterson, Honourable Edward Picco, Honourable David Simailak, Honourable Louis Tapardjuk, Mr. Hunter Tootoo.

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Deputy Speaker (Hon. James Arreak)(interpretation): Good morning. I would like to ask Mr. Curley to say the opening prayer.

>>Prayer

Deputy Speaker (interpretation): Good morning and welcome, Mr. Premier, Nunavummiut, and the members. Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Barnabas (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, members and my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 18(1), I seek the unanimous consent of the House to waive Rule 27(2) and proceed immediately to Item 14 on the Orders of the Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. The member is seeking unanimous consent to proceed directly to Item 14. Are there any nays? There are no nays. We'll proceed to Item 14. Notices of Motions. Mr. Peterson.

Item 14: Notices of Motions

Motion 017 – 2(4): Censure of the Premier – Notice

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Wednesday, September 19, I will move the following motion:

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Iqaluit Centre, that the Premier of Nunavut be censured.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will seek unanimous consent to deal with my motion today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Item 14. Notices of Motions. Mr. Tootoo.

Motion 018 – 2(4): Extended Adjournment – Notice

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Wednesday, September 19, I will move the following motion:

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Iqaluit East, that notwithstanding Rule 4, that when the House concludes its present sitting in Iqaluit, it shall be adjourned until October 23, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will seek unanimous consent to deal with my motion today. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. Notices of Motions. Item 15. Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills. Item 16. Motions. Mr. Peterson

Item 16: Motions

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask for unanimous consent to deal with my motion today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. The member is asking for unanimous consent to deal with his motion. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Please proceed, Mr. Peterson.

Motion 017 – 2(4): Censure of the Premier

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Premier of Nunavut is selected by the Members of the Legislative Assembly to represent all residents of our territory;

AND WHEREAS the responsibilities of this position demand the highest standard of conduct and decorum and the qualities of humility, compassion and respect for others;

AND WHEREAS the Premier of Nunavut has publicly acknowledged that certain profane and derogatory comments that he made in relation to the presence of senior female leaders of the Nunavut Association of Municipalities at a public event held earlier this year in Labrador were unwarranted, unprofessional and unacceptable;

AND WHEREAS the women of Nunavut are entitled to be treated with respect;

AND WHEREAS the Members of the Legislative Assembly are of the view that an apology to the House and all Nunavummiut is essential to restoring the dignity of his Office;

AND WHEREAS the Members of the Legislative Assembly believe that the Premier's ability to bear the burdens of office would be strengthened by seeking counselling and guidance to assist him;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Iqaluit Centre, that the Premier of Nunavut be censured. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Peterson.

Before we proceed... I'm sorry.

The motion is in order. Before we proceed with debate on the motion on the floor before us, I have a few comments to make as to procedures.

Every member has a right to speak once to the motion for a total of 20 minutes. The mover of the motion speaks first, and the seconder speaks second. The mover of the motion has the right to the last reply which closes the debate. To the motion. Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by acknowledging and thanking all of my colleagues for their contributions to the development of the motion before the House.

As you know, the Members of the Legislative Assembly have been present in Iqaluit for the past several days to attend meetings of our standing committees. This has given us the opportunity to undertake thoughtful, considered deliberations on this very serious issue. I acknowledge the responsibility placed on me by my colleagues as the mover of the motion.

Mr. Speaker, I anticipate that a number of members will also offer their own comments as we begin consideration of this motion.

For my part, I feel that it is important to speak directly to the residents of our territory who are listening to us today, and to answer the questions that they have asked us.

Mr. Speaker, when the incident referred to in the motion first came to public attention, many of my constituents approached me with their concerns. I heard a lot of questions from the people whom I represent. I'd like to share some of those with you today. For example, the people asked me:

“Do the Premier’s comments reflect the attitude of Nunavut’s MLAs towards women in positions of leadership?”

“Is this kind of language acceptable from people with positions of great power and authority?”

“How do MLAs hold the Premier accountable for his comments?”

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the motion before the House answers these questions.

The pressures of elected office are great and many of the duties and responsibilities certainly place considerable stress and strains on politicians.

However, this is not a valid excuse for when a politician suffers from a serious lapse of good judgment. Everyone faces difficulties in their jobs but they deal with it.

Nunavummiut expect, demand and are entitled to far more from their leaders. The motion is a clear call for accountability to the public as a whole and to all Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would not be where I am today if it were not for the tremendous strength of the many women whom I have relied upon over the years for advice, guidance and support.

I personally found this incident to be disheartening and sad because I know and respect the ladies who were involved. Both of them have been and are continuing to work hard on behalf of all Nunavummiut. The hurtful words to which they were subjected were unacceptable and unworthy of us all.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the motion before the House makes it clear to our constituents that we take our responsibilities seriously.

It also addresses the qualities of humility, compassion and respect for others. It demonstrates that we as MLAs believe that the Premier and government must recognize and respect that there are a great many other individuals and organizations in Nunavut who are also working tirelessly to improve the quality of life for all of our residents. Their opinions and positions may sometimes differ from ours, but they are entitled to be treated with courtesy, dignity, and respect.

Mr. Speaker, a motion of censure is not a trivial matter. It is an important parliamentary tool that we hope we never have to use.

The censure motion reflects the serious nature of these proceedings and the serious way in which MLAs have approached them. I am confident that passage of the motion will begin the public healing process and restore honour to the House.

I encourage all members to support it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. To the motion. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the seconder of the motion before the House, I rise today to speak in support of it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that while the matter before us is a difficult one, it is necessary that we as the Legislative Assembly deal with it in a clear and decisive manner.

All of us are well aware of the circumstances of the unacceptable and inexcusable behaviour that led up to the sitting of this House.

In my conversations with colleagues and constituents, it has become clear to me that there is a public expectation that we address this matter in a manner that will allow us to go forward, and concentrate on the important work before us.

I am satisfied that this motion accomplishes that goal.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the language of the motion clearly sets out the position of the House. As elected members, we all recognize and accept that the public places certain expectations on each and every one of us.

Yes, we are held to a high standard, but nobody forced us to run for office. We chose to serve the public and - in doing so - we accept certain responsibilities and obligations.

Mr. Speaker, as Nunavummiut follow our deliberations today, they will see that we are serious about accountability, leadership and responsibility.

In this matter, Nunavummiut themselves and all Members of this House are entitled to receive a clear and direct apology.

We all recognize that the incident in question reflected poorly on our territory, and received negative attention from across the nation.

It is important that we recognize that this is not just about one or two individuals – it is about how we are represented as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that a unanimous vote today in support of this motion would send a clear and positive signal to the public, and I hope that we will all rise as one when the time comes to be counted.

Mr. Speaker, I do feel the need to speak to the issue of consequences. When the individuals involved in this situation came forward to express their concerns, I thought that their actions required a significant degree of personal courage.

It is not easy to question power or blow the whistle on wrongdoing. I certainly know that.

Constituents have told me that they have felt intimidated into silence because of fear of revenge, reprisals and retribution against themselves, their careers and their families.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have raised this very concern in the House in relation to one Iqaluit family and how an organ of this government has attacked them in court for daring to come forward to express their concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed and dismayed that the mayor of our capital city and elected President of the Nunavut Association of Municipalities felt the need to formally seek assurances that the organization that she leads would not be punished for the concerns expressed by its leadership in relation to this incident.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I and other members will not stand for any kind of reprisals against our constituents or communities because of the way their elected representatives vote on this motion today.

A new school or a long-awaited upgrade to a health centre should not be a pawn in a political game. The needs of our communities come first, and I serve notice that actions to the contrary would be the end of confidence in our present leadership altogether.

Mr. Speaker, the wording of this motion is indeed strong.

However, it is also hopeful.

I am hopeful that resolving and concluding this incident today will allow us to renew our energies and refocus our attention.

The motion speaks to qualities of compassion, humility and respect for others. These are fundamental values in our consensus approach to government.

I certainly acknowledge that I have sometimes fallen short in meeting these values, and there have been times when I have needed to apologize. We all have jobs to do, and it is important that while we may not always agree with the positions taken by others, we can still respect them as people.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support this motion before us today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. To the motion. Mr. Curley.

Mr. Curley (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to make a short comment on the motion and to say that I was shocked, hurt, and disgusted like many Nunavummiut about the Premier's statement about the NAM's CEO last June using derogatory language.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that this Assembly is a consensus style, not a party system government, the response expected by the public and the individuals affected has not been effective.

Mr. Speaker, as a Member of this Legislative Assembly, I feel I am responsible, in part, for not being able to ensure that our citizens, regardless of whom, they deserve respect, compassion, and fair treatment from our leaders.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier has apologized last June for his remarks. It is an appropriate and important first step required by our leaders from public trust and behaviour as political representatives is questioned, or fails.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, as an MLA, would like to publicly apologize to Ms. Lynda Gunn's pain and suffering she has endured since last June. Mr. Speaker, I believe the public trust and confidence needed to lead this government by our current Premier has eroded deeply throughout Nunavut as a result of his actions.

Mr. Speaker, there is no consensus among the MLAs in this Assembly to remove our Premier by a non-confidence motion. Therefore, the motion to censure the Premier for his unacceptable behaviour towards women of Nunavut is brought before you today.

Mr. Speaker, the motion before us does not preclude the Premier doing the right thing. He can restore public trust and bring back moral authority needed in this government by voluntarily resigning as leader of this government. If not, why not?

I ask all Members of the Assembly, including the Cabinet Members, to support this motion and vote in favour. Mr. Speaker, to abstain from the vote or against the motion, will send a negative message to our children, elders, and women that women in Nunavut are inferior to men. So I urge all the members to stand in support of the motion. (interpretation ends) That's the least we can do for Nunavummiut. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Curley. (interpretation ends) To the motion. Mr. Premier.

Hon. Paul Okalik (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. I have listened with great care to the thoughtful words of my colleagues. Just as I have, and will continue to seek advise from my elders. I want to express my appreciation to my constituents and other Nunavummiut who have spoken to me directly on this matter.

The Members of this Assembly are right to have tabled this motion of censure and I believe it should pass with unanimous support. I will not attempt to use any words in my defense, because, Mr. Speaker, I believe my words that are in question are indefensible. That is why to all of those involved I have apologized personally, publicly, directly, and in writing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be just as clear with you, my colleagues in this legislature, and all Nunavummiut. I apologize unreservedly, and recognize that my behaviour and lapse in judgment was hurtful to others and reflected poorly on me.

There is no place in one's public or personal life for words or deeds that belittle another person. At one point or another all of us have felt the lash of discrimination and we need to remember the pain the words can inflict. We must remember those experiences not so that we become bitter but so that we can learn, grow, and become part of the solution.

The path towards healing is not always an easy road to travel but with each step and misstep we have an opportunity to reflect on our actions. I would rather the government that I have the honour and duty of leading be recognized for advancing the status of women.

I would like to thank all my colleagues that the two women were selected to the Cabinet. I, in turn, I asked the Honourable Member from Rankin Inlet South/Whale Cove to serve as my Deputy Premier, along with her ministerial responsibilities. I have been able to rely on the contributions from the Honourable Member from Nattilik, and she guided both the Department of Finance and the Department of Health and Social Services through periods of change; I would also like to thank her.

At the most senior levels of our government, I have had the privilege of constructing a core of women deputy and assistant deputy ministers, who make up one third of our departmental executives. And I want you to believe that the government will be protecting the women and my statements did not... and I want you to know that we will be protecting the women in Nunavut and we have tried to protect the women of Nunavut through Legislature.

My late mother tried to teach me about how to be a good man. I believed that my mother was a very good person. She didn't want me to become this way. I have learned from this and I will not use it again.

I apologize to everyone and also in this Legislative Assembly. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great care to the thoughtful words of my colleagues, just as I have and will continue to seek the advice of my elders.

I want to also express my appreciation to my constituents and other Nunavummiut who have spoken with me on this matter directly. The Members of this Assembly are right to have tabled this motion of censure and I believe it should be passed unanimously.

I will not attempt to use any words in my defense because, Mr. Speaker, I believe my words that are in question are indefensible. That is why I have apologized to those involved both personally, directly, in writing, and publicly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be just as clear with you, my colleagues in this legislature, and all Nunavummiut: I apologize unreservedly and recognize that my behaviour and lapse in judgment was hurtful to others and reflects poorly on me.

There is no place in one's public or personal life for words or deeds that belittle another person. At one point or another all of us have felt the lash of discrimination. We need to

remember the pain that words inflict. We must remember those experiences not so that we can become bitter but so that we can learn, grow, and become part of the solution.

The path towards healing is not always an easy road to travel but with each step and misstep we have an opportunity to reflect on our actions. I would rather the government that I have the honour and duty of leading be recognized for advancing the status of women. This Chamber had the wisdom to appoint both of our female colleagues to this government's Cabinet.

I, in turn, asked the Honourable Member for Rankin Inlet South-Whale Cove to serve as my Deputy Premier, along with other ministerial responsibilities. I have been able to rely on the contributions to the Honourable Member for Natilik as she guided both the Department of Finance and Health through periods of change.

At the most senior levels of government, I have had the privilege of constructing a core group of women, deputies, and assistant deputy ministers, who make up a third of our entire government's senior bureaucracy.

I would hope that all women who contribute to making this government strong understand that my comments do not in any way reflect my work. I would rather that my actions allow us to celebrate our victories, such as our *Family Abuse Intervention Act* and our *Human Rights Act*.

Mr. Speaker, my late mother taught me to be a better man. In order to honour her legacy and out of respect to my colleagues and all Nunavummiut, I pledge to you today that I have learned my lesson. I apologize without reservation and I'm humbled by this House. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ms. Aglukkaq.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the issue before us certainly is a reminder of the motions that we had all supported in this House and today I want to speak as an elected person, as a woman, and the Minister for the Status of Women.

Before I begin I want to also thank Lynda Gunn and the Mayor of Iqaluit for having the courage to speak up and bring this issue before us. I also wanted to say that I believe the issue before us is much larger than the comments made to Lynda Gunn and the Mayor of Iqaluit. I think we have said it through the comments that we've made. The Premier certainly has made comments to us that this is a larger issue in our territory.

For me, certainly, as being an elected person here as a woman; of two ladies in the House; I've been a subject to similar incidences here in the House and it's absolutely unacceptable. And we've said that in the past but we have to go on because we're elected to represent the people that have elected us the best way we know how, and the best way that we can.

In doing our jobs we have to put aside our differences and our views to work together on the challenges before us and that should fundamentally be how we do business in the House and not be subject to verbal abuse at any time.

What concerns me about this issue is that we've done so much work in this House to address issues for women, as the Premier had said, work with the Status of Women, the legislation that we introduced for domestic violence, the symposium we held for *Inuuqatigiittiarniq*, and much work hosting the FPT for Status of Women. There's a lot of work that has been undertaken here in our territory.

What's really hit me in this whole process is how do we convince Nunavummiut that we mean what we say in this House when it comes to that type of issue? Certainly, in our territory, there are women out there asking the questions that we are raising here today. How do we know that you mean what you say in addressing verbal abuse and domestic violence in our territory? It is a very difficult question asked of me as an elected leader.

I think there's lesson learned here in the House. And the question is, again, how do we ensure that we learn from this incident and address the issue of domestic violence in our territory? It's the very issue in our territory. It's a big issue. We know the statistics; the statistics are terrible and it has to stop. It starts with verbal abuse. And for myself, it's difficult as an elected official for me to stand up here today, as a woman, as a minister. It saddens me to stand up here today to speak to this. It's embarrassing as a territory.

Certainly, what we do in this House and the integrity of the work that we do in this House rests with our words and with our actions. And for the people out there, and for the young women and the women out there, I hope, certainly, that this will not discourage you from seeking political life because you are contributing to the society in a very meaningful way. And the work of Lynda Gunn and Mayor Elisapee demonstrates that. It's unfortunate that they're not here today but I would, again, for the record, I'm concerned really on the integrity of the work that we do here as elected people.

How do we break this cycle and how do we convince people in Nunavut that we mean what we say in this legislature when it comes to verbal abuse, violence, and violence against women? Thank you.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Aglukkaq. I wish to inform the House that I have no more names on my list. Does the mover of the motion, Mr. Peterson, have last reply? Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my colleagues who spoke in favour of the motion. The comments that all the members said are certainly taken seriously by the Legislative Assembly, I hope.

I would like to see that the motion is supported unanimously; it would help to restore the honour of this House if all members vote in favour. With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I would like to call for a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Peterson. The debate is now closed. We will now vote on the motion. A recorded vote has been called. All those in favour of the motion, please stand and sit down when I call your name. All those in favour, please stand.

Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Kattuk.

Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Evyagotailak.

Mr. Barnabas.

Mr. Curley.

Mr. Arvaluk.

Mr. Akasuk.

Ms. Aglukkaq.

Mr. Picco.

Mr. Simailak.

Ms. Brown.

Mr. Tapardjuk.

Mr. Netser.

Mr. Mapsalak.

All those opposed. There being none.

All those abstaining, please stand and sit down when I call your name.

Mr. Okalik.

Thank you. Members, the results for the votes are as follows: those for the motion, 15; those against the motion, zero; those abstaining, one. The motion is carried. Thank you, members.

>>Applause

Deputy Speaker: Item 16. Motions. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Iqaluit East, that notwithstanding Rule 4, that when the House concludes its present sitting in Iqaluit that it shall be adjourned until October 23, 2007...

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I forgot to ask for unanimous consent to proceed with my motion today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. You are correct, Mr. Tootoo. You are to ask for unanimous consent if you're going to move a motion.

Item 16. Motions. Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask for unanimous consent to deal with my motion today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. The member is seeking unanimous consent to proceed with his motion. Are there any nays? There being none. You may proceed, Mr. Tootoo.

Motion 018 – 2(4): Extended Adjournment

Mr. Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry about that, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Iqaluit East, that notwithstanding Rule 4, that when the House concludes its present sitting here in Iqaluit that it be adjourned until October 23, 2007.

Further, at any time prior to October 23, 2007, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and the Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Tootoo. The motion is in order. Question has been called. All those in favour, please raise your hand. Thank you. Opposed. The motion is carried.

Item 16. Motions. Mr. Evyagotailak.

Motion 019 – 2(4): Adjournment for the Day

Mr. Evyagotailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Rule 46, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Iqaluit East, that the House adjourns for the day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Evyagotailak. The motion is in order. Question has been called. All those in favour, raise your hand, please. Thank you. Opposed. There being none. The motion is carried.

We'll proceed to Item 22. Orders of the Day. Mr. Clerk.

Item 22: Orders of the Day

Clerk (Mr. Quirke): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A reminder of a meeting of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Housing at half past one in the Nanuq Boardroom.

Orders of the Day for October 23:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors from the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notice of Motions
15. Notice of Motions for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
20. Report to Committee of the Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

22. Orders of the Day

Thank you.

Deputy Speaker (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Clerk. The House stands adjourned until Tuesday, October 23, at 1:30 in the afternoon. Thank you.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House adjourned at 10:42*