

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

Speaker

Hon. Paul Quassa
(Aggu)

Hon. David Akeegok
(Quttiktuq)

*Deputy Premier; Minister of Economic
Development and Transportation; Minister
of Human Resources*

Joelie Kaernerik
(Amittuq)

Pauloosie Keyootak
(Uqqummiut)

David Qamaniq
(Tununiq)

Emiliano Qirngnuq
(Netsilik)

Tony Akoak
(Gjoa Haven)

Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole

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(Rankin Inlet South)

*Minister of Health; Minister
responsible for Seniors; Minister
responsible for Suicide Prevention*

Allan Rumbolt
(Hudson Bay)

*Deputy Speaker and Chair of the
Committee of the Whole*

Pat Angnakak
(Iqaluit-Niaqunnguu)

Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole

Adam Lightstone
(Iqaluit-Manirajak)

Hon. Joe Savikataaq
(Arviat South)

*Premier; Minister of Executive and
Intergovernmental Affairs; Minister of
Energy; Minister of Environment;
Minister responsible for Immigration;
Minister responsible for Indigenous
Affairs; Minister responsible for the
Utility Rates Review Council*

Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak
(Cambridge Bay)

*Minister of Community and Government
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Energy Corporation*

John Main
(Arviat North-Whale Cove)

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk
(Pangnirtung)

*Minister of Culture and Heritage;
Minister of Languages; Minister
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Corporation*

Hon. George Hickey
(Iqaluit-Tasiluk)

*Minister of Finance, Chair of the Financial
Management Board; Minister of Justice;
Minister responsible for Labour; Minister
responsible for the Workers' Safety and
Compensation Commission*

Patterk Netser
(Aivilik)

Hon. Elisapee Sheutiapik
(Iqaluit-Sinaa)

*Government House Leader; Minister
of Family Services; Minister
responsible for Homelessness; Minister
responsible for the Status of Women*

Hon. David Joanasic
(South Baffin)

*Minister of Education; Minister responsible
for Nunavut Arctic College*

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Iqaluit, Nunavut
Thursday, May 27, 2021

Members Present:

Hon. David Akeegok, Mr. Tony Akoak, Ms. Pat Angnakak, Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak, Hon. George Hickee, 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 partake in this session. Although most of the MLAs are located within their home communities, they are all able to participate, so I would like to first welcome them. 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, especially in Iqaluit, the spring sitting of the Legislative Assembly will be conducted in sort of a hybrid format. There will be members in their own communities and some will be here, but we will be meeting as a 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.

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 compatriots 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.

Furthermore, 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, who was born in 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 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.

And, 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 our community's residents 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 for their foresight.

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. Akeegok.

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

Hon. David Akeegok (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 support to 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 and 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 about the dead whale carcasses that we found landed on the coast of Pelly Bay, and 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 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 onto us as youth and young people even unto this day, knowledge that we pass onto our children and grandchildren and which we preserve for our descendants and 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 from my family, from myself and from my wife. Last month on April 20 we had a daughter, which we are quite 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 would also like to acknowledge the people of Iqaluit. We had to isolate right after the birth and I would like to thank the people of Iqaluit for 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. Iqalumiut 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 Iqalummiut 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, 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 him.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud today 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-Niaqunnguu, 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. 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 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.

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

I wish to make a statement today that I will have questions at the appropriate agenda item 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.

In my constituency, once the outbreak occurred in Iqaluit, many services were immediately suspended or ceased, especially medical travel and appointments here in Iqaluit. This was due to their concerns about spread of the COVID-19 virus outwards, 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 querying them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I too want to ask about the status today as it regards medical patients today, our elders, our pregnant women, as I will want to see appropriate numbers or figures of impacted constituents since the outbreak of this pandemic and 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 Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Ms. Towtongie.

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Can you hear me now, Mr. Speaker? Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will ask some questions about the COVID-19 situation. Can you hear me, Mr. Speaker? I will have questions about COVID-19 and the smaller communities. I would like to know when they will be getting the second vaccination. I will want to know if there are plans to do vaccinations for the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Members, in the communities especially, we can hear you when you're speaking. You don't have 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 because as I struggle with the early anniversaries, I'm thinking about all those families in Nunavut. In the last five years we've 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 and 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, we talk about great family gatherings during COVID, two days of families lost to violence, and 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. Speaker. I would like to say "thank you" to the people of Gjoa Haven. They have been following the 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 you 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 caretakers. 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. Speaker.

>>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. Akeeagok. My apologies. It is ready now. He rose and then he didn't. 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 I would like to thank my fellow residents of Rankin Inlet. It seems like COVID-19 is the only topic we are talking about, although there is a lot of other stuff going on. 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 in the Kivalliq, so I thank them for always listening and knowing the guidelines.

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

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. 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 that offer extra help. I would like to thank them as well, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

>>Applause

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. People of Nunavut are experiencing spring. It's great. Members' Statements. I have no more names on my list. 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 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 Cape Dorset in Kinngait. I'm pleased with that and I hope it stays that way.

However, I would like to rise not about COVID-19 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 and four of them started the whole thing and they shovelled a lake because they wanted to play hockey. They did that in Kinngait starting 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 that started this on their own. They are Andy Saggiatok, Novualia Adla, Isaiah Nungutsuituq, that's my nephew, and Ethan Manning. Mr. Speaker, those four youths, I'm sure, had the help of other youth.

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 real good thing and the fire department was able to pour water on the rink so that it can be 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 someone 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 honours the indigenous communities bestowed upon its own people for culture, heritage and spirituality award.

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 and they concern 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 the incidents where these bowhead whales died? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Before the minister responds, I just want to inform members 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 tomorrow we will do the orders of the day properly. Minister of Environment, Mr. Savikataaq.

Hon. Joe Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I very clearly recall the times you brought up the issue of bowhead whale carcasses around the Kugaaruk area. I have no new information with regard to the bowhead whales aside from the fact that there was in fact another incident with the death of a bowhead near the community of Taloyoak.

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

If you or anyone in Nunavut are looking for more information or if you should observe incidents such as animals that appear ill, are behaving abnormally, or have died from no apparent cause, please inform the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board 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.

The people of the Kivalliq who are sent down to Manitoba on medical travel for surgery or for follow-ups is concerning to me at this time because COVID-19 is rampant in that province.

We have heard on the news that in Manitoba, the Department of Health 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-19. 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-19 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 the member for asking that question. Mr. Speaker, with COVID-19 arriving in our territory, we have kept making changes to ensure that only the patients who need immediate care are sent out. We have made that change in the Kivalliq region. With the high number of COVID-19 patients in Manitoba, our Department of Health, who is responsible for patients who are required to travel to Manitoba, ensures they are assessed individually.

A person is assessed and if it's an immediate requirement, they send the patient down. They decide whether the patient can be cared for in in their community or if they need to be sent out of the territory. We make sure that individuals are properly assessed before deciding whether they are going to send the patient out of the territory or not. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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, but there are emergency cases that arise suddenly and unexpectedly. My question for the minister is: if there is an emergency case in the Kivalliq region, for example, and a medevac is required to send a 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? 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. If they can't go to Winnipeg, we look at other provinces where they can take immediate care depending on 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 patients or a patient 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. Kaernerck.

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

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to get used to my mask. Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Health in regard to COVID-19.

My first question, Mr. Speaker: using the Amittuq area as an example, Sanirajak and Igloolik, have you stopped any medical travel because of the COVID-19 situation in the southern provinces and how many were there? 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, and I know there were some, but I don't have the numbers offhand as to exactly how many patients had their travel delayed here in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously numbers are not available due to travel stoppages. Now, with respect to the figures we received earlier today, no new cases have arisen, as I believe there is a total of 22 cases here in Iqaluit.

Now, when patients were ensconced at the Tammaativvik Boarding Home during the pandemic, were they tested for the COVID-19 virus or not? Here I mean patients arriving into Iqaluit or 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-19 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 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-19 and if their sickness is easily diagnosed, then testing is done as well to determine if they have the virus or not through this testing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Kaerner (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 disseminated 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 whereby patients from medical travel still have to adhere to 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 coming from Iqaluit to their communities are told to be in isolation for at least two weeks and to not 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. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: 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 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 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 Iqalummiut 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, 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. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: 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 is: 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 this 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. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There hasn't been any real direct federal release 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 Tununiq, 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. 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-Niaqunnguu, 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 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 and I recently sent him correspondence regarding that approximately two weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, we were just informed today that the contract was cancelled, and I wonder what the reasoning for that cancellation is. We were highly anticipating the commencement of the construction to 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 what the reason is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. David Joanasié (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, indeed, we did open that process in March and it was indeed closed on April 13, 2021. There was only one bidder on the project, and we set aside \$27 million for these improvements for the Sakku School. However, the sole bidder submitted a tender proposal over \$55 million for improvements listed for that particular school. Due to that, 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, as these improvements are required, but we need to be innovative to determine how best to move forward with our plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Netser (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 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 Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié (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 different options as to 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, 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. 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. The Department of Education would like to have a meeting with the district education authority and look at moving forward with this project. 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-Niaqunnguú, 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 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. Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: 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 to 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 were 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, 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. Akeegok.

Hon. David Akeegok: 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. Kaernek.

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

Mr. Kaernek (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. Towtongie.

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

Ms. Towtongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to query the Minister of Health regarding this matter.

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-19 and want to know when the vaccination round would begin in Chesterfield Inlet.

The letter states that many Inuit are still waiting for their first shot, as well as the second follow-up shot, however, no schedule or time has been identified within the community of Chesterfield Inlet. Furthermore, when residents call their local health centre, they are informed that the health centre staff are also uninformed of the potential time for the next vaccine rounds.

Now, I wonder if the Department of Health and the responsible minister can provide tangible information on when the 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. Kusugak.

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 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 capsules and these vaccines have to be utilized in a timely manner. When they do get certain numbers of people who want to be vaccinated, vaccination takes place. That's how it has been across 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, but we are enquiring about the age limit that those individuals can be vaccinated, 12 and up, and parents are concerned if vaccines are given to their children. Should the parents be informed if their children are being vaccinated? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that no individual will be given a vaccine if they are 12 years old and under. It is for individuals

who are 12 years old and over. When the vaccines become available, they will be used for those individuals 12 and up. With the rules that are currently in place, there is no survey or questions on whether the parents should be informed or not, but they will probably be informed of the types of vaccines that will be made available and upon availability in the communities and what will be in place for those who are younger. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Towntongie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister for that clarification. I believe that parents understand that those individuals who will be given shots will be 12 years of age and up. The other question, one of my constituents wrote a letter on the rules in place in the coming months. They want a clear timeline of when the youth will be given the vaccines when 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. We did identify that we will be going to the communities to provide vaccinations and we will continue to do that when we start vaccinating the younger generations. There will probably be charters going to the communities. I know how the vaccines will be stored will be very important and there will be rules in place and which communities will be prioritized. Clear guidelines will be made available on this. 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 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. Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié (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 when positions are open for principals or any other position. 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. Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (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. Perhaps the minister can 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. Joanasie.

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, priority is given within Nunavut. For example, a priority level one is assigned to residents of Nunavut and Nunavik, to beneficiaries, and to applicants that are able to speak Inuktitut. These are all factors that are considered and given first priority when positions become available. Irrespective of that, yes, we occasionally have to look outside of Nunavut and because of some of the plans we made like shortage of staff for individuals and shortage of principals available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker (interpretation): Thank you. Oral Questions. I have no more names on my list. Continuing on. Written Questions. Let's go back to Item 6. 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 been hearing all sorts of things as MLAs. We hear all sorts of different things from people in general and also from the news about the government and I heard...I don't know if this is true or not, so I would like to ask the minister about the Department of Human Resources. There has been a hiring freeze. I would like to ask the minister if this is true, if this is actually the case right now. Can the minister explain that to us? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, we have not done that, Mr. Speaker. There has been no hiring freeze. The positions that need to be advertised are still being worked on, but we have been trying to do it very correctly. 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. Akeagok.

Hon. David Akeagok: 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 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 needs 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. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health. When the minister speaks, they tend to be believed more than other people.

The question I would like to ask the Minister of Health is regarding Gjoa Haven and the Kitikmeot. 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? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you to my colleague for asking that question. I can respond to that very briefly. The answer is yes, they have to go through isolation for 14 days once they’re coming from the south 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 time, but the guidelines have to be followed. I have seen where some people are going to be almost done, they're going to be leaving the next day, but they break the guidelines and then they have to restart the isolation from day one. Some of them have even had to restart their isolation more than once.

Isolation is very important. Although we want people to come home as soon as possible, please try to complete your whole isolation period properly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 more than once, 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 and have to restart? 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 speak to them to make sure that they don't break the rules and if anything needs to be corrected or fixed up a little bit at the isolation hubs or if that person is breaking the guidelines, we try to work with those persons 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 they can. 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 people coming from medical travel and going through isolation for 14 days and they complete that, and then once they are home after the isolation period, the question I get asked is: once they are home, do they also have to stay at home and isolate for another 14 days in their home community? 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 with the isolation. Some of them go through hospitals in the south and they use personal protection 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. They are then told that they are not supposed to go out in public and cannot have visitors. There are circumstances like that.

However, general medical patients, once they 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 Kaernerck.

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

Mr. Kaernerck (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 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. Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernerck (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. Our government projects right now, none of them have been cancelled. There are situations where some projects might get affected budget-wise, but we are keeping on top of what's going on within southern Canada. 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. Kaernerck.

Mr. Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was my last one, but that raises another question. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, let me try to rephrase my question. Were there any also postponed government projects Nunavut-wide rather than cancellation? Were there any postponements for the 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.

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's 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.

(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.

An Hon. Member: 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*

