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Tuesday, November 7, 2023

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Iqaluit

Speaker: The Honourable Tony Akoak, MLA

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

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Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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Iqaluit, Nunavut
Tuesday, November 7, 2023
Members Present:

Hon. David Akeeagok, Hon. P.J. Akeeagok, Hon. Tony Akoak, Mr. Bobby Anavilok, Ms. Janet Brewster, Hon. Pamela Gross, Mr. George Hickes, Hon. David Joanasie, Hon. Joeline Kaerner, Ms. Mary Killiktee, Hon. Lorne Kusugak, Mr. Adam Lightstone, Mr. Solomon Malliki, Hon. John Main, Hon. Margaret Nakashuk, Ms. Karen Nutarak, Hon. Daniel Qavvik, Ms. Joanna Quassa, Mr. Inagayuk Quqqiaq, Mr. Joe Savikataaq, Mr. Craig Simailak.

>>House commenced at 10:01

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Tony Akoak) (interpretation): Good morning. Before we begin, Ms. Quassa, can you say the opening prayer, please.

>>Prayer

Speaker (interpretation): Good morning, my colleagues, and to the people who are watching the televised proceedings and listening to the radio broadcast, welcome. We will use this new day wisely.

(interpretation ends) I recognize the Member for Arviat South, Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the people of Arviat, I say “good morning” to you.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to proceed directly to Item 19 on the order paper. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The member is seeking unanimous consent to proceed directly to the Committee of the Whole. Are there any nays? There are none.

Item 19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Tabled Documents 1 – 6(2), 120 – 6(2), 163 – 6(2), and 174 – 6(2) with yours truly in the Chair.

>>Laughter

I ask that all members remain at their desks so that we can proceed immediately in the committee.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

**Item 19: Consideration in Committee
of the Whole of Bills and Other
Matters**

Chairman (Mr. Akoak): I would like to open the proceedings of the Committee of the Whole. Do members agree that we deal with the following: Tabled Document 1 – 6(2), Tabled Document 120 – 6(2), Tabled Document 163 – 6(2), and Tabled Document 174 – 6(2)? Do members agree?

Some Members: Agreed.

**Tabled Document 001 – 6(2):
Katujjiluta Mandate –
Consideration in Committee**

**Tabled Document 120 – 6(2):
Government of Nunavut's
Progress on Katujjiluta Mandate
Priorities – Consideration in
Committee**

**Tabled Document 163 – 6(2):
Government of Nunavut's
Katujjiluta Mandate Mid-term
Report on the Highlights of
Achievements – Consideration in
Committee**

**Tabled Document 174 – 6(2): Updated
Ministerial Mandate Letters –
Consideration in Committee**

Chairman: Thank you. We will now proceed with the opening statements from regular members. You have five minutes for opening statements. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Nunavummiut watching our proceedings.

I would like to start off by expressing how much I appreciate many aspects of our consensus style of government. I think one of the most important aspects that I appreciate the most is the level of stability that we maintain in the House through debate, which is in line with Inuit values and culture.

Although our job is, of course, to hold the government accountable and represent our constituents, I like to do it in both a critical as well as a cooperative fashion, oftentimes providing solutions

and recommendations to issues and concerns that I have.

Another aspect that I truly appreciate about our consensus model is the capacity that we as members and committees have to influence government policies and decisions.

The last item that I appreciate about our consensus model is the amount of confidential information that members and committees receive that other Assemblies and party systems do not allow that same level of information.

Why am I talking about consensus and our consensus model? It's because I would like to recognize the effort that this government has put in bringing our Assembly back to the original consensus model that was intended 25 years ago.

As this is my second term, this was my first opportunity to participate in the mandate development at the Full Caucus level and I do appreciate that. There were many of my suggestions and recommendations that I put forward through that mandate development process that actually did make it into the mandate, and I will be focusing on those areas over the next few days.

One other item that I would like to recognize is the collaboration between ministers and regular members. I appreciate Minister Kusugak for inviting members to participate in his MLA housing taskforce and I, for one, participated in that and it felt like it was a very prosperous endeavour. There was also another MLA taskforce on elders, which I did not have the opportunity to participate in, but again would like to

express my gratitude for that opportunity.

In closing, as I mentioned, I will be focusing a lot of my questions on areas that I put forward during the mandate development process, but I will be having many other questions to every minister about the progress that has been made over the last two years and areas where you wish you could have been a little bit more productive. I will also be providing my own input on recommendations in areas that I would like to see further advancement, but I would also like to be asking questions along the lines of how you will be prioritizing your department's efforts over the next two years.

With that being said, I look forward to the debates over the next few days and I very much look forward to hearing some responses and hopefully some commitments from ministers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Opening statements? Any other opening statements? Seeing none, as the Chair, I will open the floor to questions. Regular members may ask questions. The Chair will exercise discretion in the order of recognizing members. Any questions from the members? Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to pose my first questions to the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

One area prioritized by the Nunavut Housing Corporation is to provide purpose-built housing. This is an issue that has been raised quite substantially over the last number of years. There are

a number of different categories of purpose-built housing. I would like to ask the minister if he would be able to provide the House with an update on progress made in this area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For openers, I would like to thank Mr. Lightstone for participating in the housing programs and policies review that we did. I, too, believe that it was exciting to be able to have those kinds of discussions.

Mr. Chairman, there are a number of purpose-built housing plans that we at the housing corporation have been working with. The housing corporation board of directors have been very energetic and looking for ways to improve the housing situation across Nunavut.

We all realize that it can't all be social housing that is being built in Nunavut, but we need to participate in helping Nunavummiut become homeowners and not everybody can become a homeowner overnight. With some of the programs that we do have, I think it begins to work towards being able to be in your own home or in a home that you can afford and be able to grow from or with.

In terms of the homeownership program that we talk about, we are bringing back the Homeownership Assistance Program to enable those that can build their own homes some avenues in order to be able to do that. If it's provide them with materials and/or labour or a combination of the two, that's the path that some

would be able to participate in. We're just waiting for that process to be approved and finalized before we can bring it forward.

There are other programs out there that are things where the public would participate in, in terms of affordable housing. It's an application program that the private and public sector could apply and work with the housing corporation to create affordable housing situations. The corporation would help fund part of the builds for those and it would enable those participants in it to access those houses to be able to rent housing units at more affordable housing than the private rental areas.

We are working with other agencies to try to find ways to be able to get into or build housing units. In fact, this year, we have been working very closely with Family Services to seek ways that we could put people not necessarily in their home but at least in a home.

I remember that when we were doing the retreat in Cambridge Bay, one of our colleagues said that it was "Sleeping from your couch to their own," and that stuck with me. I think it's important to be able to sleep on your own couch if it's in a home, a transformational home, or what have you, but we're working down that path and it's an exciting path to go down.

Some of the things that we're doing, for example, the modular home units that are coming up to be used as staff housing but will be given to the community, to the housing associations or what have you, can be turned into homeless shelters and temporary housing or permanent housing. There are a lot of

moving parts to it. I'm excited and I know the corporation is excited about those. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Before going back to Adam, I would like to thank Ms. Brewster for passing me a note and reminding me. Today is a proud day for all Inuit in Nunavut. It's happy International Inuit Day.

>> *Applause*

Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for that response. I've got just a couple of follow-up questions before I move on.

Generally when people are discussing purpose-built housing, two areas come up most frequently and that's purpose-built housing for elders and purpose-built housing for others who maybe have forms of disability. I was wondering if the minister may be able to elaborate or talk a bit further about how the Nunavut Housing Corporation has been discussing purpose-built housing specifically for elders or those who are otherwise disabled. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of housing for the disabled, I think it's important that we have housing for those that need to have access how to get in and out of their houses or how to access what many of us take for granted, like light switches and getting in and out of the washroom safely and securely, and I think that's very important to keep in mind. I know

that we work with the local housing associations and keeping an ear to the ground with the associations in terms of what kinds of needs there are in the community and being mindful of that as we move forward and building the housing units. If there is a requirement for those in existing or future builds, the corporation is always looking to see how we could improve those situations.

In terms of supporting the elders, that excites me. In previous years, we had built four-plexes, common in most communities, and they're referred to as elder housing. They share a common wide hallway, a ramp to be accessed into the main hallway, and then it splits off into four rooms and most of them are one-and-a-half bedrooms. I know this because my mother was in one of those units. They're very handy and helpful for the elders, but I think one of the things that we are looking at is to see if we could expand that. There are so many elders that want their grandchildren to be with them more often than not to help them and spoil them, of course, but that reality is there and we're taking a look to see how we can improve on that.

One of the discussions that we have been having, modelling off something in the western Arctic, is to see if we can't have elder-friendly units, purposely built for the elders, that would allow to have a common area for get-togethers and also to have a room set there for, for lack of a better term, a caretaker or someone to watch over them, that if they press a button or something like that, that individual would come and assist them in whatever it is that is required of them, maybe help them with their medication and stuff. That kind of an elder housing unit is something that we've had

discussions on at the corporation, and I know we've had some initial discussions with some of the staff and the minister with responsibility for elders.

Yes, those are on our agenda of items to work through over the next two years, and I get excited when we get to talk about innovative ways to do some of this stuff. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In response to my first question, the minister had indicated that he would like to help more Nunavummiut purchase and become homeowners and move into their own homes. I was very glad to hear that.

One issue that we face in Iqaluit and in regional centres is how challenging it is for young professional Inuit to get into homeownership. Right now, with the rates that housing has escalated in recent years, our young professionals who are hard-working and have good jobs are priced out of the market. Have you put any thought into specific programming for that demographic to assist them in being able to buy their own home? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is frustrating. It must be very frustrating for young professional Nunavummiut to look for a house and they're priced out right at the top and/or they have never heard about the unit being for sale and it's gone, or by the time that they apply for the mortgage programs and what have you, the unit is already gone.

One of the things that are attuned to that is just the enormous cost to build a house. I think the corporation has done really well in the last year by getting contracts that are coming in at \$600 to \$700 a square foot instead of \$1,000 to \$1,500 a square foot. Hopefully that will kick in at some time and be passed on to potential homeowners, but there is a need there.

When you take a look at Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet, for example, the cost of land is so expensive to develop. At the end of the day, it all gets passed on to the homeowner, so not only do you have to look at dropping the price of the labour to do that but also the price of the land. I know that in Rankin Inlet there's a price difference between a first-time homeowner and the second-time or more homeowner. I think there's room to work on those, but just a few weeks ago, the NCC went out and asked for a quote for a number of modular homes. They're coming in at about \$500 to \$600 a square foot. That might be the way to go.

I also think that at one time, it was highly touted to have stick-built homes in Nunavut, and the housing corporation was always directed, "You have to build stick-built homes because it creates employment in Nunavut." Yes, that's true, but I think we're in such desperate need of houses right now that the cheapest way we can get them is priority. I'm hopeful that that will help potential homeowners. The other program that we're putting out there is the ability to buy existing housing association homes and maybe that would attract some future first-time homeowners. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the minister's response. The Nunavut Housing Corporation has had the Tenant-to-Owner Program for quite some time and I believe it has been put on hold in recent years. I think that is an excellent opportunity for our young professionals to get into the housing market. I do appreciate the minister's response and I hope that over the next two years, we will see some movement in that area.

One of the other items in the mandate is "Review and improve the delivery of Government of Nunavut staff housing."

Along the lines of our young professionals upon graduation, when they return here to Iqaluit, and I'm not sure about the situation in the other communities, but the CMHC has identified Iqaluit's housing rental market at near-zero vacancy for four consecutive years. Our recent grads come back home and they're unable to rent an apartment. They're unable to buy a home, they're unable to get into public housing, and most often than not, they're unable to get into staff housing.

Last week I made recommendations to the human resources minister to consider an internship specifically for recent post-secondary grads to allow them an employment opportunity at the earliest opportunity. Tying it in with the review of Government of Nunavut staff housing, I was wondering if that issue can be discussed in collaboration with your counterparts over the coming years, specifically if and when an internship program is created for our post-secondary grads, if it can also include housing for our young professionals. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Definitely, I think that's what these discussions we're having today are about, to hear some ideas and recommendations and seeing if they can work. I believe so. I think every recommendation should at least be looked at thoroughly to see how it could work. We need to do better. We need to do better as MLAs and as a government. I think there are a lot of recommendations that come out of meetings and this is a perfect avenue to take a look at those kinds of things.

When we had those meetings and in Repulse Bay, it was so nice to have that kind of very frank discussion to see "Why don't we try this and why don't we try that," and have those discussions one on one with senior staff. I thought that was very helpful for everybody in the room, and I think this discussion we're having today is really a part of that to take a look at where we are, how we're doing things, and how we could improve. I will take your comments and I will see what we can do to make improvements in those areas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I appreciate your response. Moving on, another item that has been identified is to "Renovate or repurpose existing buildings for use in the housing continuum." I was wondering if the minister would be able to provide an update on progress made in that area over the last two years. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we could have more improvement in that front. We have been spending a lot of energy in the last year and a half, maybe in the last year, trying to deal with the Nunavut 3000 and get the housing issues upfront, with staff shortages across the board and other things that I think we could do better in that.

We continue to work towards trying to see how we can retrofit and refit houses and buildings so that they could be better utilized at a faster rate. I think this is one that's important across the board, where we have infrastructure that can be adjusted and revised so that they can be better utilized faster and at a longer rate. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to renovating and repurposing existing buildings, to get into the details, how many potential buildings have been identified? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have that particular detailed information, Mr. Chairman. Sorry. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate all the comments provided by the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, and

now I would like to ask questions to the Minister of Finance.

One of the priorities of the Department of Finance is to “Prioritize actions to encourage residents to move from Government of Nunavut staff housing and social housing into...rental units or homes of their own.” I would like to ask the minister if he would be able to provide an update on progress made on that item. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: I’m sorry, Mr. Chairman, could Mr. Lightstone ask that question again? Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone, can you repeat your question? Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the minister to provide an update on actions to “encourage residents to move from Government of Nunavut staff housing and social housing into affordable rental units or homes of their own.” Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To be quite frank, there has not been a lot of action on that front. When we look at encouraging individuals to go into their own home, there are no homes to go into, so we need to do better on that. I think, moving forward, we will work within the different agencies to see how we can encourage more homeownership and seek out better ways to get individuals

out of staff housing and public housing, and into a home that the individuals could afford.

I know that in the previous discussions my colleague had with the Minister of Housing, they talked about different kinds of housing situations that individuals could get into. I think, until we speed that front up more, then we could have more real discussions in terms of how do we get government employees into their own home that is out there. Right now there are no homes for most people to get into other than the one that they are in or the one that is being built. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move on. Along the same lines of questions of getting GN employees out of staff housing and into homes of their own, one issue that I have been raising over the past several years is the rate at which the government pays the Nunavut Household Allowance to GN employees and how it has been gradually decreasing over the last number of years.

In relation to this mandate priority, has the Department of Finance been collaborating with the Nunavut Housing Corporation to monitor the number of employees that leave staff housing and then sign up to receive this Nunavut Household Allowance? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’m sure it’s there

somewhere, but in terms of having it on hand, I don't have that information in terms of those numbers in detail. I am sure I can find it or I can get it, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe this will be my last line of questioning. One item that the Department of Finance is doing is working with the Department of Human Resources and the Nunavut Housing Corporation to review the Nunavut Household Allowance. I would like to ask for an update on progress in that area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are still taking a look at how we could improve that. I think that's one mechanism that could be used to encourage people to go from renting to owning, Mr. Chairman. Firstly, we are working on those numbers and on that issue, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am glad that it is being worked on. That is very good to hear. It is very unfortunate that halfway through our term we have yet to see tangible movement in this area.

As the minister indicated that the departments are still looking at this, I'm curious to know how many meetings have occurred between these three departments and, if they have regularly scheduled meetings, how often they

would be. Lastly, can the minister provide us with a rough estimate as to when we can expect to have an announcement in this area? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To discuss that item and only that item in detail between the departments, I believe they have met a couple of times. In terms of having exactly when we would be able to come up with something tangible to suggest or recommend in terms of revising, adjusting, or changing the allowance, I do not know. I am very hopeful that within this fiscal year, we would be able to come up with some numbers to work with on that front, Mr. Chairman. It is real.

We need to make some changes and adjustments in terms of being able to help homeowners and people get out of staff and public housing and into their own. It becomes very prohibitive, not just cost-prohibitive but housing availability in the city of Iqaluit. There is less than 6 percent vacancy rate in Iqaluit's rental market. Of the leases in Iqaluit, 23 percent of the market is public housing units in Iqaluit, and GN and federal staff housing, 42 percent of the staff are in those.

It is important to come up with, I think, a more friendly number in terms of having housing allowances and adjusting those. I really hope we could do something within the next year on that front, definitely something before the end of the cycle of this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Members, if you have any questions, please put your hand up. I just have one name on my list so far. Next person is Member for Aivilik, Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning to my constituents and colleagues.

I have a question for the housing corporation. On page 27 under (interpretation ends) strategic outcomes (interpretation) in the mandate, it states, (interpretation ends) “At least 1,000 units of all types added to the stock of affordable housing and continuum of [housing] options.” (interpretation) I would like to get an update on progress in this area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): This is within the Nunavut 3000 strategy that you are asking me about. The work to date by the Nunavut Housing Corporation, and new units are under construction in the communities listed. I had it written somewhere about the actual numbers, but to date, the projects are all moving forward smoothly in these communities.

The other housing units that are scheduled for construction are being planned for next year, with any additions required added. Furthermore, the housing units scheduled for construction requested by the NHC for private homeowners or for prospective homeowner applications. Many projects are moving forward.

For example, we wish to see (interpretation ends) affordable housing units (interpretation) within the Nunavut 3000 strategy. They have to apply to the Nunavut Housing Corporation to get funding to build these (interpretation ends) affordable housing units (interpretation) and these are going through that program. For any interested people, they can submit applications outlining their plans to the Nunavut Housing Corporation. We receive and review the applications in communities that want to construct private homes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This other issue under (interpretation ends) affordable (interpretation) housing units, as it is written, and separate from the (interpretation ends) public housing units (interpretation) and their rent skyrockets when they actually work, right to the highest rent possible depending on their salary or annual income.

Has this rent scale and immediate highest rent assessable upon employment received any reviews to lower the ceiling in light of the ever-increasing cost of living? Everything is expensive now, impacting their rent, especially the tenants who are on the low income threshold. Have you considered or looked into how you can lower the price? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the rent scale is based on the rental of the unit, as an example, the house condition, the age

of the unit, how many bedrooms are in the unit, and the tenant's annual income or monthly wages.

The operating costs of these units owned by the Nunavut Housing Corporation, and used by the local housing associations, costs between \$25,000 and \$30,000 per annum. It includes the electrical, the water/sewage costs and the heating fuel contribute to these expenses.

Many tenants sometimes cannot pay. Some pay a partial rent and it rarely approaches the costs to pay these very expensive rates, especially at the top of the ceiling. There, they pay a bit below the level of the unit's operational costs.

During our committee meeting in Naujaat, this was brought up, and the debate centred on ways to improve this challenge, because even with the rising costs of rental amounts, even just trying to pay for healthy nutritious foods is very expensive. Even trying to buy hunting equipment is exorbitantly high.

Even just trying to survive on a daily basis, as you pointed out, things are continuing to rise so we are reviewing the entire gamut of factors that lead to higher rents, and how it can be less taxing on our tenants, so we are indeed looking at the factors currently to see how our tenants can live comfortably while paying the rental amounts monthly. There is a middle point somewhere, and yes, we are looking for ways to improve that today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the

minister. As Members of the Legislative Assembly, we usually get complaints or statements from our constituents.

The houses are aging, but their rent is still high. It creates a problem when renting an older unit because of the high cost of renting and issues of inefficiency of the unit for heating. I would like to urge the minister to review the rent scale because we have to have proper housing for the people of Nunavut. With the high cost of living, we're just barely making it by with all the costs of operating a home and putting food on the table.

Under the *Katujjiluta* mandate report on page 27, it speaks to (interpretation ends) enduring partnerships with Inuit organizations, private sector, and other levels of government, to expand housing continuum.

(interpretation) Regarding Inuit organizations, my question for the minister is: How are you working with the Inuit organizations? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My documents are all over the place. With Inuit organizations, we are, as Nunavut Housing Corporation, more than willing to work with Inuit organizations. I'll use Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated as an example. They have been given federal funds to build housing in order to increase the number of units that are available.

We don't have access to that money, but we are more than willing to work with them. We have had several meetings

with the management of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated on the subject of housing. We have told them that we are more than willing to help them in any way we can.

We are more than willing to work with them and to listen to our concerns, but my main goal is to ensure that they build more homes to alleviate the shortage. I don't really care where that money comes from, as long as it's used to build housing for the benefit of Inuit. We know how many are on the waiting lists for housing. We have all that information, so we wanted to have that information available should they ask for it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, for the private homeowners, there are benefits available. For example, there are emergency funds available from the Nunavut Housing Corporation. At times, when people make a request to access emergency funds, they don't receive any response from the Nunavut Housing Corporation. At times, they have late responses and denials of their access request even though they are trying to access those funds. I would like responses sooner, so they can deal with the situation or emergency at hand.

My question to the minister is: how many individuals asked for emergency funds? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With the emergency funds, we have had

numerous requests. If I recall correctly, there were 100 requests made to Nunavut Housing Corporation. I agree with you. We have to respond faster.

We don't hear about situations where there are immediate responses, and then, again, we have to properly fill in the forms in order to access those public funds. We sometimes have to wait for signatures and so on. With the communication and easy access nowadays, we can respond faster. At this time, we are looking at the situation and sometimes they are denied if they are over the limit by \$500. There is room for improvement in accessing those benefits. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister. There is always room for improvement.

I have another question regarding homeowners in Nunavut. In smaller communities especially, there are no housing supplies at hand. My question is if the local housing organizations can help those homeowners by supplying the building materials. Once the homeowner receives their supplies, they could replace them. Is that possible? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, of course. That's what we are trying to do at this time. I think it was two years ago that I received a call where this individual stated that the home heating tank might be leaking and that he did

order a tank by a supply ship that was around March-April, way before the ship was due, and he didn't have insurance. The local housing organization had a supply at hand, and we informed the individual that they can have that tank, and that he returns it when the supply ship comes.

Even today, we are working on some programs where a homeowner in a smaller community, and usually there is an annual maintenance done on the furnace; we informed the homeowners that they can utilize the local housing organization. It's quite hard to maintain a private home, but we did set up those types of programs after we had a meeting in Naujaat. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Just a reminder to members that you can ask any questions to any minister this morning. Next member, Member for Uqummiut, Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to begin. I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Finance. I have a question regarding how the process goes with the *Katujjiluta* mandate. How does the process go when you're dealing with the department's budgets? There's quite a lot of money that is usually requested by the department because, of course, it's for the whole of Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to budget requests from the department, we all want money to run the schools, health

centres, housing, or anything that is operated by the government.

All of these have to go through the system, and usually, a department produces some documents substantiating their requests, and what kind of urgency there is. Once we have compiled all the information, the deputy ministers of each department review the requests and decide which ones will be a priority. Is it for elders or youth? Then we prioritize it from there.

For example, they may have listed 10 items as a priority, and the health centre is a priority over an arena, school, or playground. There are usually different requests from different departments. Once we go through that process, we identify the priorities.

The government departments, for example, local housing organizations, we have to prioritize which community goes first, and then there's education and environment and so on. They each prioritize their requests in their department. It's not an easy process. We also must think about the funds that are available, and we try to make sure that we put a priority on what is needed by the communities and the government. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your explanation. I believe that we do not think deeply enough. There is a lot more to what we're hearing, and I want to see more about it. I would like to use that information to work harder.

I want to ask these questions. What comes out of the government and all the ministers of all the different departments in their reports? Are there any reports that are supposed to be given to you and they were given to you late? Are there other departments that are late with their reports? Is the information that you have different from what the members are saying? When the other departments are requesting money from you, have you had to go back and review the money requests from all the departments? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Yes when we're meeting here as well. We go through the financial proposals, and we get questioned as to where this is at and has this been set up yet, for example. During question period, we would have meetings like that ourselves, in cabinet, and in our boardroom. We try to get the complete information, and sometimes there are disagreements, but we try to come to an agreement.

We see certain requests that need to be improved or we need more information on it. We don't just rubber stamp them, we don't just say yes to all of them, and we have to take ownership of the work that we do. There is no request that is just approved off the bat before they are properly reviewed. We look to make sure each request will have the proper budget and enough of a budget for what they want to do, and because we're dealing with public funds, and at cabinet, we don't always agree on everything. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for explaining that very clearly. So in the past two years that we've been at work here, we approve the appropriations and make sure that the expenditures are being paid out properly and being used for the intended purpose. Has that process run well in the past two years? That's my question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I gave the briefest answer, I would agree. Nonetheless, there is always a caveat, Mr. Chairman when we are debating large infrastructure projects, which we must construct and even in the most urgent cases, even with our wish for immediate gratification, the processes we must follow and legal requirements often become barriers.

While we are on this territory that has no road connections, everything must be bought prior to shipping it from the southern locales and every little piece of material needed has to be shipped up. With these transportation obstacles, sometimes it takes up to a whole year to replace stuff, causing the cessation of work on the project as it is too late in the fall to have them shipped up.

It also means deferring funds that would have been expended in this year, to the next fiscal year causing another year's delay. If you were down south, regardless of the materials, such as in Alberta or Ontario, the funds allocated for that year are used in that fiscal year budget.

When they undertake the construction of a large building, all of their building materials are available in their province, so they purchase them and their workers are all from the same area, so the money expended for the project remains largely within the home province, and the benefits accrue directly to their residents.

Here in the north, without road access if we want to construct a building, we are required to first purchase everything from the southern stores, and the construction companies get paid, and if we want to build an office, all of the metal foundations and all construction materials are bought from the southern companies, from our capital funds, and when the materials are shipped up construction, they take another bite by shipping up workers to construct the buildings, so money is basically flying out as they use our capital funds that could have helped develop our communities further.

We miss out many times due to the process as it is laid out, as 100 percent of the materials come from the south. We do need to start implementing more changes, as these capital funds should be providing benefits to our local workers and companies whenever infrastructure is being constructed within Nunavut.

This is what usually causes these delays and setbacks, due to the unavailability of construction materials up here and the lack of a road connection to the southern provinces allowing constant trips back and forth all winter. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your response. Like you stated, there are areas that need to be improved, from your own witnessing and experience, you have recognized the fact that things need to be improved. We still have two years in our term, and we'll be proceeding with the *Katujjiluta* mandate in the Sixth Assembly and because of that, I'm asking what can you say, or are you able to say: If we do it this way, like if you've seen a route that you can take to do a particular task, can you tell us something about what could be planned? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): People of Nunavut are very able. They're good at making different considerations to improve Nunavut for Nunavummiut. If we keep supporting that idea, I believe we can create things that will improve things for us. For example, in Arviat, Sakku Development is going to be building a prefabricated building that will be used by Nunavummiut.

Different ways of thinking like that, we can use to make and create things more cheaply. It would be good if we could get more things not just for building homes or building but for other infrastructure. As long as they are built by people from up here, windows and roofs can be built up here and then sent out to the communities. We can find ways to make things more available in Inuit land. We should help each other better so that more of the money stays in Nunavut. It's like the money is just taken out of Nunavut and there is really no other benefit that can come back to

Nunavut, so we need to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move on to something else and ask my question. Thank you, to the minister for answering my questions, but I'd like to move on to the Premier. I have some questions for the Premier. Previous governments in the past have done their work too, in Nunavut on behalf of northern people. Many people have said that they told the truth in the past and Inuit too, have been told about the north in the past. I'm talking about the past so that everybody will understand my question.

Inuit were told that a long time ago that they were visited by certain people telling them that they would be helped. They would have inexpensive homes and have schools.

Using the *Katujjiluta* mandate as base for us, we can use the mandate to create good things. We have the next two years as an Assembly. For the past two years, we have been hearing about the past two years during presentations and comments. In your opening comments yesterday, we noticed that there have been some developments during the opening comments referring to the past two years.

Because of that, I would like to ask you, Premier: can you explain to us (interpretation ends) and share with us some plans, or visions that you had for Nunavummiut that you have realized? Looking at the mandate, *Katujjiluta*, it may not be possible to achieve.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I start my answer, I'm very proud today is International Inuit Day, especially the elders and those who are no longer around, they kept us up. We would not be here if it wasn't for them.

My colleague is saying the truth. When we first started this government, we looked to see how we can work together and that was going to be our mandate after I got elected. I am very grateful and also grateful to my colleagues here for putting me in my position and I have always been grateful for that.

Regarding the vision and in the beginning, I wanted to base everything on *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* with *Pijitsirniq*, *Ikajuqatigiinni*, and *Qanuqtuuqatigiinni*. After we all got elected, we went to Cambridge Bay to do those things and we realized that everybody has to be involved in it. We had some big expectations, but we also understood that we can't do this on our own. We have to work with others to do this, so we have to always look at our past. There are very many important issues right now with lack of housing and lack of office spaces. We have to work together to create them to make our vision a reality.

Yesterday, when I was listening to the opening comments, I became very proud because we have initiated many, many things and we had some big things as well. We had some big plans when we

met in Cambridge Bay. Only two years have passed, and big projects have started with housing, and, for example, daycare development is growing and progressing.

The question if there is anything in our mandate that we will not be able to do much with, I don't really know of one. I know some of them will run faster than others. Most importantly the things that I have pushed for as Premier is building homes and we have to plan this so that it will be used for many years from now on. I will keep pushing for them.

In the coming days, I have to do a lot of listening and try to hear more from the Members of the Legislative Assembly. I know some programs have been delayed, and I'll be expecting to hear from the Members of the Legislative Assembly as to where I should be pushing more for. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm almost out of time, but when we talk about *Katujjiluta* and the communities getting the same kind of level of service. The smaller communities do not have the goods and service as the larger communities. The larger centres are getting all of the attention. The smaller communities have the same needs. I want to bring this up and ask about the two years that are coming up. What more can you do in this area, for the smaller communities? I would like to understand. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Pauloosie Akeeagok

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank her and I agree with her totally. I come from a small community, and it is always that the larger communities get more of the benefits. I, too, hold this to heart that the smaller communities need to benefit.

I think we can use, for example, in the two years that we've been here, some haven't seen houses in seven years for being a small community, and through the planning process, we wanted to build in all 25 communities. The urgency, whether you're in Taloyoak or Clyde River or Iqaluit, or Rankin Inlet, it should be the same that communities are seen in the same way.

This is something tangible in that as we look at the dock facility in Qikiqtarjuaq. That too, my fellow member has pushed for. In terms of working under *Katujjiluta* and community benefits, that was an example I wanted to bring up. We too, hear that we always have room for improvement, and that the benefit too, for small communities is totally open.

My office is always open to see what priorities we need to set. I am hearing things that we need to pursue as the leadership. Many projects have proceeded forward, but I know we still have a lot of work to do. Housing is a major issue that communities have requested. I will expect these priorities in the future that we heard about through question period and through visiting.

I am grateful that we have worked for the smaller communities. I have visited smaller communities such as Clyde River, Kugluktuk, Kimmirut, Naujaat, and Grise Fiord. To see the small

communities ourselves, to be open to hear from them, and to see and work with elders directly, is something I want to do. Thank you.

Chairman: You still have 27 seconds left, and I have no other names. Ms. Quassa.

>> *Laughter*

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Firstly, I want to ask the minister responsible for the (interpretation ends) seniors' portfolio (interpretation) and I noted some written language relating to the previous survey of the elders in our communities. It asked what they considered as priorities, both for healthier elders and those who require home care or assistance.

I wonder if the minister has thought about the local places that elders can gather at, not for provision of care, but a place where the elders can gather at, and have games or other activities specifically for our elders. Thank you.

Chairman: Minister responsible for Seniors, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. Before I start, Mr. Chairman, sorry, I would like to say Happy Inuit Day to everyone in Nunavut. It is especially important to remember our ancestors and those loved ones who came before us, those who are here with us now and those in the future who are coming forward.

With that, we hold the highest regard and respect to our elders and always have had them as a foundation and a

pillar for our strength as a territory. We know that our elders are aging, and it is one of our top priorities within the mandate to have spaces for our elders. We're really keen and excited to have the elder care strategy come forward.

I really am looking forward to seeing the recommendations that were put forward by all of our elders who were consulted from all of our communities, and for the stakeholders that engaged in the strategy to come forward with what they want to see.

I know there are many examples of spaces in our communities that our elders have as gathering spaces. For example, in my home community, we have an elders' palace, and that's utilized quite a bit for elders to come together and share meals, instruct traditional activities and so forth. I think those spaces that are there for those purposes are very well utilized.

We have a lot of great programming in our communities for elders to engage with themselves as it's a great way to get them out and to be healthy, but also engage with our younger generation to share and pass on traditional knowledge and our language through the activities that are formed.

In terms of actual strategic plans or initiatives, we look for that document, and I look forward to seeing what recommendations do come forward through that setting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the

response. Also, not all communities have elders' committees or coordinators, or services. We have heard from elders that they are searching for assistance and support, and it has been requested. Perhaps the government can think about support for elder committees and provide that support. Have you thought about this area? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, to the member for that question. I think standardizing programs and services is taken up by several different entities, and the government does have funding to support elder committees through the Department of Culture and Heritage.

I ask that all hamlets and non-profits, if they would like to have a committee in their community for servicing elders and a board that is there for our elders to come together and make decisions for the community, that they can utilize funding that is out there through that department.

If we have anyone interested, my door is always open to looking into what is available. If the member sees a need for her constituency to spark up the elders committee, we can definitely have further discussions in that area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the response. In terms of solutions, I too have thought regarding elders, that they are not good at proposal writing, and for

some, they cannot comprehend the concept. Maybe it would be better if the elders that have committees in communities be assisted in filling out forms for government programs. This would be better for the operations, in following the desire that they want to help in the community, but it is based on proposal writing with which they have a difficult time.

Another area that elders have mentioned many times is that we need vehicles in communities dedicated to elders, service for elders, especially for communities that do not have taxis. I wonder if this had been considered. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I once again thank the member for the questions and comments. Mr. Chairman, we do have government liaison officers in all of our communities that are there to assist with government forms or applications. I know their doors are always open to meeting the needs of the community and servicing different agencies or people out there.

I believe that if there is any support needed directly for applications in regard to servicing our elders, they are always there to help them. If there is any form that needs to be supported, the specific department that the individual or organization is applying for, the department would be very happy to help where needed in that regard.

In terms of the member's question in regard to servicing our elders through transportation, I know that that again is different in each community. Oftentimes

it is run through the municipalities where they have specific elders' buses or vans. I know the need is great across our communities.

I know that information on the different community elder buses was being investigated to see if it would be feasible, in the future, to come forward with a proposal for that type of service delivery to be offered. I know that is being explored and hopefully we can have something tangible in the future, but I know that is exploratory at this moment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for listening to my comments. I would like to expect that to happen sometime in the near future, because the elders have been requesting buses or vans and want to make sure that they get their vehicle.

Moving on to a different topic, I would like to ask a question on Economic Development. Minister, you have stated that there is some funding for large infrastructure projects for the community that they can request. What kind of capital infrastructure could the communities apply for? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Every time I look at you, I just want to say Mr. Speaker. It's difficult to call you Mr. Chairman. I do thank the member for her question.

As I mentioned earlier, or I alluded to yesterday, in regard to capital infrastructure, we are way behind compared to the infrastructure in the rest of Canada. Some of our airstrips are too short and they are now remodelling the new airplanes. It's impossible to use those in the north, so we need capital infrastructure.

All the communities have requested for docking facilities, or a marine facility. They are now constructing marine facilities in some communities. Within this year, we did a study as to what kind of programs the communities would like to see. We have already received requests for marine infrastructure by the communities.

The federal government was supposed to be responsible for marine infrastructure, but they stopped. They are now getting back to building marine infrastructure, and we have applied for ten communities to get support through this program. I have not received a response from the federal government in regard to this issue.

Additionally, there are different development initiatives, such as for commercial fisheries, fish or meat plant requests and in these areas, we try to work closely with the communities and I anticipate seeing these projects come to fruition in the future, but at this time, we are looking for funding to help us in this regard.

We continue to look for other avenues for funding, and appreciate my colleagues for approaching me with these ideas, and in searching for more options in dealing with these issues. In the last two years, I have tried to work

closely with the regional Inuit associations and if one will be submitting an application, or if one will receive more funds.

As an example, in the Kitikmeot region, the regional Inuit association has wanted to receive funds for the construction of an all-weather road at Grays Bay, and if this project proceeds, then they can work on that while we allocate our limited funds on other projects, so these large projects, if they can receive the large capital funds that we are unable to fund as I understand it.

We do understand our limitations, and due to these many factors, the question from the member, I tried to answer with what we do with our limited funding, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your response. I know that your department doesn't have funding for all the communities and I know all the communities would like to get more infrastructures.

Perhaps if the minister can elaborate further on which communities applied for capital infrastructure, or were requesting support?

What are the barriers when they are requesting this support? The communities have been requesting for many years, and they are not able to get what they request for. Perhaps your officials should elaborate further to the communities about what kind of barriers they face sometimes.

The barrier is that they cannot be approved. Perhaps your officials can write a letter of correspondence to the communities so that the government official at the community level can inform the community. Have you considered this? Can it work like that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes. We'll try to provide that through various avenues. When we have too many barriers, like for example in Kivalliq, a barrier for the highway and the road construction that they have been talking about to go down to south. They want to make a highway to the south and connect with the rest of Canada.

If they work on that road, looking at the funding for that, it is a barrier we are facing as of now. At this time, we have set-up a plan for the new year that we will be visiting the communities to talk about how we construct the road to connect with the rest of Canada. This is going to be very beneficial to all the Nunavut residents.

We're always looking for various ways, how we can support, and every time we run into barriers, we look for other avenues to give them support, some are expensive to construct such as Rankin Inlet's road construction, and also paving the airstrips with concrete, they have been requesting for those, but I was unable to find funding for the construction of these, but I'm still looking for funding, and looking at other ideas.

In regard to the airstrips, we would like to construct the airstrips not with the concrete, but we are looking at ways how we can construct these and we're always looking for funding as northern Quebec is doing that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. Perhaps, if you apply for less expensive programs or services for the smaller communities, and work on the smaller communities, start with them and then go to the bigger communities, that way we can have more communities. That's just my suggestion.

Moving on, in the report, pages 72 to 73, (interpretation ends) we provided \$764,768 through the Country Food Distribution Program to support country food and programming and harvesting infrastructure in communities across the territory. (interpretation) Perhaps your department have looked at the communities in Nunavut as to how many communities have infrastructure to support this program or start up this kind of program, or improve it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just getting back to the member's comments in regard to the airstrips in the smaller communities, in the past, the smaller communities were left behind, so we're now working on the four smaller communities, and we have now a transportation garage for their transportation equipment because the

equipment they receive don't have a garage to place them, because the smaller communities had nothing. That's why we have established these, and I'm very pleased as a government and I'm very proud of the regular members that you have approved the funding to use this. I'm very proud of that fact, and I will continue to work on that.

In regard to your later comment, we are working on the communities that don't have a community freezer, and we are looking at the other communities that do have deep freezers. As the Nunavut government, we had difficulty as agreeing as to whose property they were, so the government and hamlet councils were going back and forth because there were operational costs for the freezers, but they are required to have this equipment.

The Department of Economic Development and Transportation has now created this fund, and the contribution agreement our Premier announced in his opening comments, we used that funding to clarify that situation surrounding the freezers that are to be used by the communities. It outlines how they will be allocated the funding, who will operate the community freezer as well as what uses are compatible within the agreement.

This program is being developed and I am happy about the progress in this area, as every community who has requested a freezer has to apply to this specific fund, and we also provide the application forms. If the community wishes to get a larger freezer, we have to look for other funds to complement the funding they receive.

This is how we approach the requests from the communities, and we also communicate with the relevant MLAs, so I encourage you to keep requesting freezers under this fund, and they also provide an opportunity for the community to develop their local economies. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the minister for elaborating on the process for the freezers. Remaining under 73, there was a project in Rankin Inlet which was used to send out country foods to their local foodbanks.

I wonder if this has been under consideration by your department to supplement the foodbanks in both the Baffin region and Kitikmeot regions, to see how they too can receive some country foods, and further, another question is: what about the clientele of the Income Support Program? Especially if there is no local foodbank, how can these programs supplementing the foodbanks assist the communities without one? Has this ever been considered to expand this program to more communities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did want to expand my opening comments to include many of these other initiatives. Nonetheless, with the limited amount of time allocated, being ten minutes and due to the time constraint, you cannot mention them all.

Nevertheless, this was included in the previous report tabled, and we could throw in many more details on the programs. This initiative was primarily towards their local foodbanks in Rankin Inlet; however, this program is for all of Nunavut.

This program was begun in Rankin Inlet, but there are 24 communities eligible for this support program, and further, we have sent out the information through this program, and all the communities are eligible for assistance, under nutritious foods funding and there is available funds. With that being the case, I want to inform all of my colleagues that this program under nutritious foods is for all of Nunavut.

The report provides that context, although it seems to state that this is only for Rankin Inlet, it was a pilot that will be for all of Nunavut. The application forms are available under the ED&T department. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa: Just one more question and it's for Family Services. In June 2022, there was a Nunavut roundtable for poverty reduction gathering. What was the outcome and what is the plan for it? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister of Family Services, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the member for asking that question. That roundtable has already been planned for another meeting in 2024, to hold another

roundtable and everyone is invited who is attending from the communities. There was also an elder who came to provide some traditional knowledge during our last meeting here in Iqaluit.

The concerns such as the rising cost of food, or searching for other avenues to share in the improvements in our communities were discussed, mostly around the high costs of foodstuffs and healthy nutritious food. There were also concerns that we heard primarily from the elders, causing an inability to keep their heads above the poverty line.

This was exacerbated by inflation and now the stores priced their foods using a (interpretation ends) food basket (interpretation) comprised of foods that provide nutritious foods from the stores and what the overall costs are. We determine the overall price of a food basket, and here in Iqaluit, the costs are used as a basis, and then compared to the food basket costs in outlying communities, so comparisons are made.

We look at these details in our comparison costing, and this also include how at that meeting we totalled the overall prices to determine how to enact more changes and improve this assistance program, so that is how we arrive at that. This used to include this factor, as poverty is quickly reached with the rising inflation costs impacting the foods contained in a food basket.

Some clients could not keep up with the rising prices, even with their income assistance as it was too low to provide them with nutritious foods, and this was our reasoning for adding a 34 percent increase to the income support funding assistance categories, and this increase

was to ensure that they can at least keep them above the poverty line. That was our reasoning, and these meetings provide a lot of new ideas, resulting in our 2024 plans.

We will be inviting the community representatives again at our next scheduled meeting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I really appreciate that the ministers were able to respond to my questions. At this time, I have run out of any further questions. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, in looking at the time, we can go for lunch and come back at 1:30. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 11:52 and resumed at 13:29

Chairman: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome back.

Just for your information and the public, Lorne Kusugak will not be in today and as well as Mr. Alex Sammutok.

Before we left, there were questions from the members. We will be starting off this afternoon with Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I go on to my questions, I just want to share my encounter that I had over lunch. I was in a bit of a rush, so I went to Quickstop to go pick up a really quick meal and I happened to come across a little boy that was sitting just inside the store. He asked me in very quiet voice if I could buy him

something, so of course I said yes and asked him what he wanted. He said he wanted some lunch. I went ahead and bought a meal for him as well and asked him if he wanted a ride home or anywhere and he said no. He went back to sitting in his spot beside the door and very quietly ate his meal.

The reason why I'm sharing this story is because it is highly related to the mandate item under reinvesting in education, and that is partnering with community organizations to enhance our school meal programs. I would like to start off with questions to the Department of Education. I am asking if the minister would be able to provide an update on any and all progress in this area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the member for the question and the information that was just shared. It's never easy to hear of our youngest populations asking for food. This is an area that we see and take in very high regard to working on implementing school food meal programs. It's a collaborative approach with the federal government that there be investments from the federal government directly to tripartite Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Government of Nunavut, and federal counterparts, to work on this action.

The Department of Education does receive funds directly from the Department of Health for all of our schools. However, we know that that can only go so far, and we do need more investment. The work is ongoing with

the federal government and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated. This falls under the Department of Health at the moment for that specific initiative.

I have met with the federal minister responsible for the Child First Initiative and brought these very real concerns up at our meeting in May. I know that the department does have a working group that has been a part of the Department of Health working group on this area. We are waiting patiently for those funds to come through from the federal government, and hopefully we can have something implemented for our children in our schools through that action.

We can't stress enough how important it is. We all see the cost of living has risen across our territory and I do thank those who have invested in this field. I know the Breakfast Club of Canada as well as Agnico Eagle Mines have directly invested into the Department of Education food school meal programs, and in sectors of our communities. I thank all those that do fund outside of governments, to support this very important initiative for our most vulnerable sector. We want everyone to feel that they go to school on a well-balanced diet and have food to fuel them throughout the day. Thank you to the member for bringing that up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for that response. I will be following up with the Minister of Health later with regard to those discussions.

Returning to the mandate item, “Enhance and support school meal programs with community-based partners,” the minister had indicated several partnerships that are assisting in enhancing our school food program, but this is an issue that has been raised in the Assembly for a significant number of years.

In tracking the progress made in that area with regard to enhancing school food programs, has the department set a baseline what school food programs we are at in the beginning of the term, and in order gauge where we are at now, and where we’re heading. If so, could the minister elaborate on that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank the member for that question. There are discussions, as I mentioned, with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and federal government regarding the increase in support. The baseline is that right now, each community school have different food meal programs. There’s not a set standard across our schools.

Some schools are accessing funds from funding agencies such as Jordan’s Principle for additional supports and some of them are in the range \$700,000 to \$1 million per community. I know that they’re able to really enhance the food meal programs within their communities through accessing those funds.

We have asked for a blanket application under that program to support and really

enhance that great initiative that’s out there, so that all of our school will receive the same access. I hope that’s the direction that it will be taken, and from my understanding, it will. I just don’t have the dollar figure, that’s up to Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the Department of Health to negotiate. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I’ll move on to the next issue. One of the priorities is to achieve higher rates of attendance and school completion. I would like to ask the minister to elaborate on progress made in this area, and specifically, where we were at in at the beginning of the term, where we’re at currently, and what the targets are for enhanced or higher rates of attendance and school completion. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank the member for that question in regard to attendance. I do know that since the beginning of the school year, attendance numbers have risen since last year. We do have the attendance toolkit, which has been in our schools as an initiative for our higher educators to work on attendance rates. There are different strategies in that document for schools to use. We leave the discretion in those areas to the district education authorities to initiate what programs they want to utilize for enhancing school attendance rates.

I know some have monthly attendance challenges, and at the end of the school

year, they also have attendance incentives and rewards. I do know that in some communities, we've seen requests for people to go into the community and work to speak with the parents and gather the students if they are not in school. Some of our community district education authorities are using their funds to hire somebody to go in and work with families and put the kids back into school.

It's up to the discretion of each district education authority, but you know whatever they see fit to increasing attendance. We really do want to see attendance rates rise but I can say with COVID, they have reasons and I believe we were at 77 percent as of September. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you Chairman, thank you minister. So you've indicated there has been an increase in attendance, and most recently of September where schools were at 77 percent attendance. That is very good to hear. The last part of that question was moving forward over the next two years, are you optimistic that you will be able to achieve a higher target beyond the 77 percent attendance? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank the member for that question. I mean those are targets, we always want to increase and I do encourage our schools to do fun activities for their students to raise the numbers and challenge the students. It can be students in one school versus

another school, if they are in the same town or across the territory and we do want to see that number rise.

I can say that, that is a 7 percent increase in attendance from last year to this year, so, post-COVID, those numbers are rising and I really hope that, come this time next year we can see higher numbers than that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you Chairman, thank the minister for that response. Moving onto my next final questions, another priority is stronger academic achievements. Earlier this week, Member Simailak brought up questions to the Minister of Education regarding streams of graduation, the three streams of that graduation, which are academic, general and individual support plans.

Last time, I recall looking at the Department of Education annual report, it didn't include numbers of graduates, but I don't recall that it actually included those three different streams of graduation.

I would like to ask if that specific stream of graduation is being monitored and if there has been any sort of improvements in a number of students graduating in the academic stream, being able to go on to university and post-secondary education. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank that member for that question. Those numbers were not included in the report, but we will ensure

that it will be included in the next one.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that response, I look forward to seeing that.

Just to follow up on that, can the minister confirm of all schools, all secondary or high schools have academic streams available to students?
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you Mr. Chairman, thank the member for the question. Yes, the schools all have the academic level, if their course is not offered, we do have options for students to take distance learning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you Chairman, and thank you minister. Another priority in the mandate is to have higher rates of post-secondary education. I'd like to ask if the number of students utilizing Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students, students who are attending post-secondary and utilizing Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students. If the minister would be able to provide us some information about how far we have been able to advance in that area so far in the last two years. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the member for

that question. Our numbers for Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students have risen and we do know that there are more people applying to the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students program. This past year, so far we have had 711 students apply. We are in November and I'm sure we will get more students applying before the deadline on November 15 for this coming year. I foresee that this whole year we will have higher numbers already precedent for this year.

It's a great thing to see those numbers rise and to have more Inuit and Nunavummiut going to post-secondary, and especially post-COVID to be returning back to school for some. It's great to hear that we have more people partaking in that program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, I appreciate your response. Another item that I would like to move on to is incorporating more life skills into the K-12 curriculum. That's very important and it's something that parents have been raising for years. Teaching cooking or other more relevant life skills in our schools is very important. I was wondering if the minister would be able to provide an update on any advancement in that area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the member for that question. Life skills are a great curriculum for our schools. We do leave

that discretion up to the district education authorities to choose what programs they want to offer in their schools.

With our new capital standards and the new schools that will be built, our schools will all be built with the top standards for our kitchens, for example. I do know that there are communities that are re-offering programs that were there in the past like home economics. We do know that those programs vary, and schools do change up the programs that they do offer from time to time depending on teacher availability and interest from the school level, what programs are out there. I encourage those that are on the district education authority, if you do hear from parents or students about what programs their schools do want to have, it's always great to know.

If there are any issues in regard to schools wanting a certain program, the department is happy to work with the district education authorities to enhance certain things that they might need, like capital infrastructure or different pieces to the school that might be outdated to offer a program that hasn't been there for a while, or re-offering a program or maintenance issues if they need new stoves or new supplies in their shop and different things like that. We are very happy to work with district education authorities to get those items back into the school if they do need updates. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Next name on my list, Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all I want to thank the

Premier for creating a portfolio on suicide prevention. As I asked during the Leadership Forum, he kept his promise.

Also, I want to thank the Minister of Housing for coming up with the Nunavut 3000 as I also asked during the Leadership Forum for a 10-year strategic plan. Our job as regular MLAs is to hold the government accountable and ensure there is transparency. To top it off, it is a privilege to be part of this Sixth Legislative Assembly, and we have less than two years to achieve the goals for our constituents' needs and the service government provides.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to direct my question to the Premier, since the minister responsible for housing is not here. The Nunavut 3000 goal is to provide 3,000 new units by 2030. It also means training for local workforces and growth in local economies. The mid-term report indicates more support for Inuit employees to obtain staff housing. According to the mid-term report, and we all know we are losing GN employees; maybe a barrier can be filled to assure employees that they will have public housing available when they retire, after they have been living in staff housing units.

Mr. Chairman, can the Premier make this available to all Government of Nunavut employees who are living in staff housing units when they do retire, can there be public housing availability? That's my question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank my colleague for bringing that question. I know that Minister Kusugak had provided responses in terms of the questions in this House that there's always that challenge of individuals that currently work for the Government of Nunavut, in this case, who are in staff housing. As they wish to retire, there's always that challenge of finding that gap. The importance that we've placed into Nunavut 3000 and ensuring that we provide multifaceted units, from public housing to affordable housing to staff housing has been a priority.

As noted by the incredible leadership that Minister Kusugak has demonstrated, we are really trying hard to ensure that we build in community that didn't receive any housing for many years. I know the member; I still recall from our first day, where I believe Taloyoak had not received anything for seven years. As an example that was used and it's something we've held. I can look into this further with the Minister of Nunavut Housing Corporation, and get back to the member, because I do not know the specific details of what actions are in place at this point in time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Premier. I'll be looking forward to working with you, as well as the housing minister.

I'm going to move on to the Minister responsible for Suicide Prevention. I have reviewed the mid-term report, and it speaks to advancing the development of the Nunavut Suicide Prevention

Strategy Action Plan, and it presented an initial plan at the 2022 United for Life Summit in Cambridge Bay. My question is: When will we see a strategy and action plan in place? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister responsible for Suicide Prevention, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for the question. (interpretation) Thank you for asking those questions, and I thank my colleague. My colleague is correct that in the fall of 2022, there was a conference called United for Life in Cambridge Bay, and over 100 people from Nunavut arrived in Cambridge Bay, coming from different organizations like government and Inuit organizations. Municipal councils were represented, and the elders were represented as well.

The action plan is still being worked on and it's getting close to completion. We've had to delay it a bit because the Department of Health does not hold responsibility on their own. We have to work with other groups like Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Embrace Life Council, and the RCMP. It's a four-part team that works on that plan.

We would like to get it completed, and I believe in the coming months we should be able to complete it. Once it's completed, I'll be able to provide it to my fellow ministers and with their own approval I'll be tabling it in the House afterwards. (interpretation ends) The answer, Mr. Chairman, would be in the coming months as soon as possible. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, minister, for your response. I will be looking forward to that strategy and action plan. Also, to the Minister responsible for Suicide Prevention, I wanted to acknowledge the Atii Angutiit program for men's wellness. I've seen the program, it's in our community, and I find it very effective. My hope is all of Nunavut can benefit from that program, all of the Nunavut communities.

I have a question to the Minister responsible for Suicide Prevention. Can a program similar to Atii Angutiit be available for women, maybe called Atii Arnait? We have to think about the ladies too, Mr. Chairman. That's my question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to my colleague for that question. That is a good idea. The member is asking if I can create this, but the action plan that we have been talking about will have different contents. Those contents will include an outline of what needs to be worked on. As to the idea if there will be an Atii women's group, I cannot say right now because we have not gotten approval for everything yet.

What you say is true. We don't have to think about only men. We have to consider women too, and also young people. There are these different demographics that need to be helped that we have to think about and consider. They each have their own ideas too.

It would be good to provide different things like that for different people. For example, it's been understood that men and women need help as well. There have been concerns raised about them as well. Where can we provide more services that are suitable for men and women? I am trying to answer the member's question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thank you, minister, for your response. (interpretation) We have to consider the women as well.

(interpretation ends) I am going to move onto the Department of Culture and Heritage, Mr. Chairman. For elders and youth programs, I was very happy to see a significant increase for the grants and contributions budget from \$800,000 to \$2.25 million.

Mr. Chairman, an elder in my constituency of Netsilik wants to pass on great knowledge and at times they do go on radio to pass on the knowledge, but with a budget increase, it will help with programming and development. I wanted to thank the minister and his department officials, and I say job well done.

To my understanding, the minister will visit both of my constituent communities to help assist residents on how to apply for funding.

Mr. Chairman, can I get a confirmation, and will the minister assure all of Nunavummiut that this contribution will

be available to all communities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Culture and Heritage, Mr. Kaerner.

Hon. Joelle Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the question. When we hear issues about funding from the Department of Culture and Heritage, and based on *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, the funds are expended to Nunavut's 25 communities. The funds are available for those that submit proposals.

Also, in the minister's statement that the department will be going to Taloyoak to deal with this issue on how to fill out applications for funding, the minister will instruct individuals from the Department of Culture, that all the communities are being supported for elders and youth programs.

You mentioned the funding that was increased, and with that, it's good to see that we are providing more funding for *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. Also, when you look at the youth, they also need leadership as well. They have to learn to preserve part of our culture and language, and the issue of language is a priority in the territory. I will try and make it when the team goes to Taloyoak. Thank you for your question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. The reason why I asked the question for it to be available for all communities in Nunavut, I have seen our regional Inuit association doing their best at

programming, and they do their programming very well, especially when they did their language revitalization. It's very important we keep our language in our regions, and in all of Nunavut. I wanted to assure Nunavummiut that the programs that our Inuit association does that the programs be available in other regions.

I'll be moving on to Economic Development and Transportation. On Page 77, it states in mid-term report that we started the Iqaluk program, a five-year training program on fisheries development. We have offered the training in Taloyoak, and I thank the department greatly as I see and witness the participants are happy and thankful. I wanted to point out that my other constituent community of Kugaaruk has potential to do a similar program. They have delicious arctic char, which is cool fish. My question to the department is: Does the local HTO have to submit for a similar program? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a wonderful program that our department has started and initiated. From what I understand, the plan is to go to various communities. I just don't have the list of when they're going to the member's other community. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister for your response. I'm going to move on to

Family Services, and then I'll go back to the department I just spoke to. Our HTOs do great to support local hunters by buying fish, caribou, and seal. Locals can pick up for free, and it's beneficial to all as it supports local hunters that provide for residents in need of *Inuksiutit* food. It benefits the residents that do not have any means of transportation to harvest. My comment is to the department: I hope this service be available for eternity. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Family Services, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the question. (interpretation ends) The Department of Economic Development and Transportation (interpretation) is wondering about other ways how they can support food insecurity in communities, especially to do with what people have been requesting in communities. We have been working with Minister Akeeagok and his department, and we too, would like to see the programs continue, as they are often requested. Thank you, Mr. Chairman

Chairman: Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister for the response. Before I go on to ask my last question, I wanted to acknowledge Northern Store for their grand opening in Kugaaruk. I believe in economic development and growth, so I'm happy for the community of Kugaaruk.

Mr. Chairman, my questions will be to Economic Development and Transportation. It's tied to the question I just asked to the Family Services minister. I have spoken and asked for freezers in all airports to help the sender who is the hunter. The reason why I asked, so the receiver receives the *Inuksiutit* country food frozen, and it will be fresh and delicious to consume. That means the hunter did great and the receiver is happy and thankful.

My question to the department is: has the department made any proposals to and from our federal government department responsible for transportation about having freezers in all Nunavut airports? Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's my last question.

Chairman: Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The issue of airports and the country foods that get shipped through Nunavut, and the amount of growth in this area; we have 10 communities that will have construction for a cargo area, and there will be a place to accommodate a freezer as well. Currently, there aren't enough in communities, and they have a hard time shipping country foods to some communities. We are working with communities to make this available. This is our first step currently and we are glad for your support. The program has been rolled out. That will be added to the airport improvements. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Next name on my list, Member for Tununiq, Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question, first of all, is to Economic Development and Transportation. The issue of increase in Pond Inlet and other communities, the carvers and the sewers, the craft makers, when they're trying to sell their products, there is a hard market for selling products in the community, and I'm wondering what options you might be considering. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for that question. When this issue is brought up, I work directly with members in the communities. Your community in particular; I was able to go to Pond Inlet to meet with the hunters' and trappers' association and the issue of cruise ships and ships coming into Pond Inlet is of concern. We have to look at these issues, and it is becoming clearer that the cruise industry pays for accommodations and various aspects of that cost separately. For some carvers and artists, whether it might be products that may contravene the different rules related to importing products into the United States, our staff are currently looking at options in terms of tourists and items that they are able to import and purchase.

The cruise ship industry had an industry meeting to look at working with communities, and to determine what they would like to see for the industry. There are different parts of the tourism spectrum that we want to see as we sit here, and it is not just the cruise industry.

There are flights by air, and there are issues related to travel problems, and the issue of arts and crafts as to how we can support them better. We will look at options along the way. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for your response. Mr. Akeeagok, those are good things to hear. The cruise ships are getting friendlier and they're opening up their wallets, and there are products that they can import and purchase. Sometimes a lot of the carvers, sewers, and artists, have problems in receiving payments on credit cards. Tourists rarely bring cash ashore, so they might have a limited amount of cash.

It might be foreign cash, maybe the euro or other currencies, like the kroner. We do have a small bank service there at the First Nations Bank, but it is not possible to convert American money at the facility. We can only take it to Iqaluit when we come here, and then we can exchange the money at the bank.

Issues like this need to be improved. We seem to be going backwards in some areas. In terms of tourism, it is increasing across the territory. Cruise ships want to see various things across the north. This can be a great opportunity for Inuit in terms of economic opportunities where we could work and make profits off the tourism industry.

We talk about financial independence. I am glad we were in Nuuk, and Mr. Joanasie, it was good to see the independent firms and businesses in

Greenland. My train of thought is not totally gathered there, Mr. Chairman. I am trying hard to think of the Inuktitut term.

It is related to (interpretation ends) business (interpretation) as Inuit could establish more businesses. There was a document under your department, specifically referring to the (interpretation ends) mentorship for business owners (interpretation) who deal with tourism specifically. I read this document; however, it is already for existing businesses.

There are four existing tourism related businesses in Pond Inlet, so they already receive assistance, but again Pond Inlet receives the largest number of tourists and (interpretation ends) outfitters (interpretation) who take out tourists arriving from the south. There are specific tourism businesses who should take over the guiding work by Inuit, at least in my ignorance of how difficult it is to act as (interpretation ends) guides (interpretation) but many young people have received training to act as guides locally.

They act as (interpretation ends) tour guides (interpretation) and I cannot recollect the term, but it would be beneficial for these young people acting as tour guides to receive outfitter training, if they received mentorship or specific training, and how to run a business as there are many opportunities available if people had the drive to work.

I feel it would be possible to start a business, so that should be doable in my opinion. There are a number of guides, perhaps five community tour guides who work with the tourists walking around

our community. There are also tour companies that arrive annually and hire drivers, so if we could have them be local, it would be another opportunity. It would really be a source of local pride.

My question is: would be able to provide support for outfitters that are not in business. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The staff I have, dealt with the many tourism issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, and our offices lost the majority of our staff, dwindling to a bare minimum.

Additionally, the tourism sector completely stopped functioning and had no opportunity to offer tourism as all travel by non-Nunavummiut was restricted. I believe our territorial tourism sector was the most impacted during that pandemic even as we worked to establish more attractions.

Due to all of these factors, at this time, we are getting more employees in this tourism sector, and the tourism initiatives we wanted are being completed, as an example, what the MLA spoke about in terms of training as we offer training courses. We are also working with the cruise ships, and the cultural advisors who accompany them were trained and now most cruise ships had Inuit cultural advisors.

Our own Inuit residents are now trained and offering their services to the cruise ship tourists with well-paying jobs which was something I completely

enjoyed seeing. I want to see this sector grow, and I wish to see the day where all of the cruise ships will have Inuit serving in those positions as that is the best scenario.

Additionally, the tourists who embark on these cruises should have Inuit guards, guides and such which I completely support in this tourism sector. I will work hard on encouraging this type of training, and I appreciate the fact you suggested as that is the type of eventuality we want to see on our lands.

As my ministerial colleague stated, if more income accrues to our community Inuit, it will remain in the community and provide another source of revenue. When we import workers from southern locales, a large percentage of the contract funds leave with them to their southern homes, and here if Inuit had comparable businesses, the monies would remain more in the communities and not fly out.

There are more and more local tourism companies that are operating here in Nunavut, and there are some companies cropping up, and we need to offer more training and sharing business knowledge, and this is slowly happening as well. In this month, I believe on November 14, the tourism association called (interpretation ends) Travel Nunavut (interpretation) will be holding a meeting with territorial outfitters.

This conference will give them an opportunity to be shown what knowledge and training is required to run the business, actually there will be some training modules listed and the minimum amount of knowledge required, and this meeting is taking

place. I will try to continue this type of knowledge transfer, as I envision that when the tourism sector grows, that more contracts will be held by Inuit businesses which would be the ideal scenario.

That is why we always urge communities to be welcoming to tourists so they can leave more tourism dollars locally and in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Minister Akeeagok. Yes, we tend to brainstorm ways to provide more support to our local Inuit, and I'm always thinking of new programs or ways to provide support to our fellow Inuit.

In regard to fisheries, I believe it's very important to Pond Inlet as this sector is beginning to develop, although it might be slow currently. Regarding the *Iqaluk* program that started in Taloyoak, I'm not sure whether you spoke to the issue, but my question is: will it be panned out to the other communities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I did speak to this issue. This program will not just be geared towards one community; it will be geared towards all the communities who apply for these programs. My colleague's constituency is part of the five communities that are members of the (interpretation ends) Baffin Fisheries Coalition.

(interpretation) This week, the large factory ship which they purchased was launched, and they will be hiring more Inuit in the fisheries as it starts fishing, as it provides many more opportunities. It is not only the Nunavut government in this sector, as we continue to collaborate with our partners who work in the Nunavut fisheries sector. Seeing the development of fisheries is very exciting, albeit we still have a lot of work, but this is at least the start of developing more diversity, which I am glad to see. I am very thankful of our communities who are working independently to start their fisheries in Nunavut.

I believe there are three or perhaps four fisheries companies operating between the communities, like turbot fisheries and shrimp fisheries. I know that they will continue to develop, and that's my expectation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Minister Akeagok. I would like to ask a question to the Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College. There are training programs of Nunavut Arctic College in the three regional hubs. The training programs are existing (interpretation ends) academic courses.

(interpretation) They are available, and it would benefit many smaller communities to offer them, as currently some communities only offer basic adult education, and others offer different courses locally. I do know you try to offer more programs to smaller communities, for example, daycare

worker programs in Arviat and Igloolik currently.

With these programs, it seems like just the same kind of programs are offered every year to the smaller communities at Arctic College. What are your plans to increase the training programs in the communities? Not all the people want to move to other communities to do Arctic College, but there are many adults who would like to do further training at home, at the community.

What are your plans for the future to make sure that they have other programs at the adult education centre? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for asking that question in terms of providing more programs across our communities. Some of our college programs are base-funded, and a lot of our Arctic College programs are third-party funded, which requires additional writing for contributions and requires writing proposals to secure funding for the programs and are put into contribution agreements to provide more programs across the territory.

For Nunavut Arctic College to increase programs into smaller communities... . For example, if the college wants to extend the programs across the territory, in terms of health related, a lot of our health programs require extensive science and math, which are very hard for our students, and a lot of those health programs have a laboratory component, which limits our communities to provide

programs in terms of the health-related areas.

We continue to explore opportunities to find funding, and especially for our capital needs. Our government is so limited that our government is prioritizing the most capital needs across the territory. That has been challenging for our government to have more capital infrastructure to build, for example, new colleges or new health centres. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Nutarak.

Ms. Nutarak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Minister Qavvik. I thought that 10 minutes was going to take a long time, but it's such a very short time. Let me say, I will ask more questions later on.

I just want to make a comment. I had a parent who worked at the adult education centre who looked for funding. That individual found \$1 million because that individual worked very hard. When staff work very hard to find funding, they eventually find it because there are some workers that are willing to help and support. There are some people who just work there who are not overly concerned about the community or the programs. So please pay close attention to the communities and to see if the staff at the local level are very helpful to community members or not. Thank you.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon to all. My first set of questions I think I'll pose to

the Deputy Premier, who is also the Minister responsible for Seniors.

I wonder if I can get the Deputy Premier's story, I guess. How involved were you with respect to putting together the planning for the elder care strategy that has yet to be completed? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Deputy Premier of Nunavut, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the member for the question. In terms of the elder care strategy, I am waiting to look at that document when it does come forward. We do have elders in all of our communities that I know have been thought about. We have had people come forward, writing emails, and coming forward to me as the Minister responsible for Seniors.

The role is more of an advocacy role at this point and I do look forward to that strategy coming forward as it will have more direction. We need to wait for that strategy to come forward first to see where the recommendations are.

In terms of my role and that document, I am waiting to review. I look forward to that to see what the recommendations are. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Deputy Premier. Can you please elaborate as to how you helped plan for the elder care strategy because there is pre-planning that is done first. What was your role in that as Deputy Premier to get that going? We're

halfway through a term and we still haven't seen anything yet at all. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you the member for the question. In my role, I have not sat down with the consulting company, so to speak, that is doing the review. However, I have sat down with Premier and other colleagues to discuss the issue. We have had lengthy discussions in various settings on our elders and our seniors.

There are emails that come forward and those are brought forward to the various departments that are responsible, so I have had different meetings on topics such as elders that are at care facilities or elders that are advocating for special interest with housing applications and different funding streams for elders and those types of things that do come through my email.

Correspondence with the various departments and meeting with those that are responsible under their different departments is where my work has lain. Thank you, Mr. Chairman...

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Deputy Premier, for your responses. Staying on seniors, my colleague Ms. Quassa had questioned you about elder care vans or vehicles that has been looked at and I believe that in one of your responses, there is still going to be a study to be done on it. I don't think I have heard an answer or mentioning one that study will

be done, whether or not communities can get an elders specific van or truck. Can I get an answer as to when that study will be done? Thank you, Mr. Chairman

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for that question. It is a exploratory topic that is underway and I do know that, the timeline, there are different scenarios that need to be looked at with regard to the cost estimates. We do know how much they do cost, and we know some communities have storage facilities and some don't, and then there is a question of drivers and training drivers and where that falls.

There are many different things to that one piece of need for our elders that does need to be taken into consideration. We have followed up with the Department of Health and we are exploring that and I look forward to continuing the discussion on that matter. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, minister. I didn't really get an answer to the when that study would be done. I know they are talking about to reaching out to partners and corresponding with the Department of Health. I assume Family Services might have to be involved in this as well.

Would that be in the coming fiscal year that the study would be done? I understand and I anticipate there has to be local community partners, maybe the hamlet or non-profit society that might

have to look after driving the vehicle or not, but I am wondering when the study would be done. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, to the member for that great question. We are waiting for the elder care strategy to be complete which we know will be done by the end of this year, and once we do have that in our hands, we will know where things are. However, we do hear the comments from our colleagues and we do know that it is a priority and we really do thank them for asking those questions because they are raising an issue of a need in our communities.

We look forward to the continued discussion, and through further discussion in conversation with my colleagues on this topic. I'll ask for updates to see where the information is in regard to each community and the details that were discussed about this topic, and look for more information towards it and hopefully that it will come forward through the budgetary process at the earliest convenience. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Chairman, thank you minister for the response. Let's ask the Premier next. Why is this elder care strategy taking so long, if the first pillar of the *Katujjiluta* mandate, as I understand there are four communities that held consultations with elders.

Clyde River or Pond Inlet, here in Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet and Cambridge

Bay, only four communities, and here we are halfway through our term and we still have yet to see the elder care strategy. So if the Premier can please explain the back story, behind the scene story, as to why it is taking so long. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok: Thank you, (interpretation) Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the member. We all agree that we have to place a priority on the elders and their programs.

He made it sound very easy, but we wanted to hear from all elders from all Nunavut communities. We had two meetings within the year. We have to make a solid foundation in order to create that elder care strategy. I am very glad that it is in the works. We have to make sure that this strategy comes from the elders.

I would first of all like to thank my colleagues for placing this as a priority. Once that money was approved, we started working right away on this strategy, started consulting with the elders from the communities, and we usually set aside or have programs for elders in different programs such as Family Services, the Department of Health and so on.

I am very pleased that some part of the draft strategy was given to me, but we have to look at further details. We are looking at December for seeing this strategy. I am very open, and I hope that the regular members are involved. Again, we are open to including the

regular members if they wanted to be included in the consultation process.

Our elders were able to participate, and as an addendum, one of the delays was that we had to go back to the elders to make sure that we included all that was discussed or whether we missed out on any of the information that was provided. I think we are all looking forward to that strategy. I am very pleased that the strategy will be based on what we heard during the consultation process. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the Premier. You indicated that you had two meetings with the elders. Where and when were these two meetings? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was in the spring. We had meetings in various communities. I believe that was your question. We had one in Cambridge Bay where we gathered all the elders from the Kitikmeot, and then in Rankin Inlet for the Kivalliq elders. In south Baffin we gathered the elders here in Iqaluit, and in the north Baffin area, we gathered the elders. We know that there are some elders outside of Nunavut. We also consulted with the Inuit elders in Ottawa. Those are the places where we had gatherings with elders in order to prepare to draft this strategy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Premier. So in the year 2022 you had meetings with elders? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's a very good question and I thank you for lobbying on behalf of the elders.

From then on, we have been working on it diligently. Once the money was approved, we started working right away. Last year, we started looking at who could coordinate this program because it's quite challenging and very important to the elders of Nunavut. We also wanted to know what their vision was, and we looked, as a government, on how we can further improve the system for elders. We know that they want to be closer to home or at home.

I look forward to having all those subjects in this strategy. I look forward to seeing this strategy possibly by next month. We will look at making sure that it's dealt with as quickly as possible and especially for the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Premier. I would like to ask the Premier: How did you select the elders to come to the meeting from the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for asking another good question. We selected the elders with Mary Wilman as coordinator so that they could interview the elders and help them too.

The representatives from the communities were selected by our staff interviewing community members. They helped coordinate the selection. So the coordinators helped us find interested elders in the communities, and also with the airline tickets and logistics. The coordinators helped in that regard as well.

We worked with regional coordinators, and we asked them to come up with a list of names from the communities. We did not say that we wanted them to select a particular elder; we wanted to make sure the community selected their own elders. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Premier. Mary Wilman called Baker Lake to see who was interested in going to the meeting, or did she contact the hamlet council to get representatives. There is an elder's committee in Baker Lake so I would like to know how Mary Wilman did the work. Who did Mary Wilman call in these smaller communities? Although I represent Baker Lake, I did not receive any questions on who they should call, so I wonder how the (interpretation ends) coordinators (interpretation) were able to do this work. It would be good to understand how they searched for elders who were selected from the communities. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman: Premier Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Chairman, and I also thank my colleague. We created local positions in the communities, who are quite knowledgeable about their communities, and Mary Wilman did not call directly to elders, rather it was the local government worker tasked with the calling, and if I recall the setup, I believe the regional manager who used to live in Rankin Inlet whose name I cannot recall now.

Nonetheless, the regional managers call their regional communities' liaison officers, and they requested information as the (interpretation ends) regional coordinators (interpretation) but we turned to the local hamlets, and used our (interpretation ends) government liaison officers who identified the best local elders who could represent their communities.

We are aware of these two areas, as they hold a large responsibility in trying to ensure the community visioning and experiences could be relayed in these meetings. So the three main regional coordinators were consulted on these issues and requested to call their communities to bring forth names for these meetings. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Next to ask a few questions to the Minister of Education in regard to expanding training programs on page 60. The header says we are expanding training programs delivered in Nunavut. There are quite a number of good

certified people that are now I'm hoping working in Nunavut.

I'm wondering how was this achieved and what is being done to further enhance these training programs? Is it done just regionally or is it done in some smaller communities? Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Chairman. I thank the member for the question. In regards to training programs, there are a number of municipalities that participated in training for heavy equipment operators. We also have a number of communities that were going through the certified journeyman program.

Those are different opportunities that were out there for people to participate in. We do have funding streams for people to go into the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students. There is an area that we do support training, post-secondary training that we also ask the Department of Family Services with that program.

There are other training areas as well that we have through the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities. We do training with our District Education Authorities under the *Education Act*, and through our Early Learning and Child Care Division, we have training for our early childcare daycare that we partner with our regional Inuit associations with to work on training initiatives for their staff within their communities.

Their staff has a daycare staff in each community that has partaken. There are several different training opportunities and we do look forward to having more opportunities for training in various sectors for to having more opportunities for training in various sectors for Nunavummiut. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Craig Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, minister. To continue on these trades training programs streams and whatnot, have you given direction as the Minister of Education for your staff to work with district education authorities locally in enhancing curriculums in each high school to see what they would want to go into?

I'll use Baker Lake as an example. If my colleague from Pond Inlet doesn't mind, I'll use her community as an example, Member for Kugluktuk as an example. We're going to have continued mining activity and a lot of our students do want to get into trades training and heavy equipment operator jobs.

Have you, as the minister, given direction to your staff to work with district education authorities to work on their curriculum to go down this stream in the trades field? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the member for the question. Our department does work closely with the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities and also with our district education authorities in our communities.

We do have work in the regard of dual credits. The Department of Education is working with the Nunavut Arctic College on the dual credit program. I know that in the past it had been there before, and we are looking to have that stream of credits be attained for high school students if they do want to take part in college programs and careers in trades.

We are looking to expand that dual credit program for high school students to go through the trades training, for example, if they are interested in going to school and taking some programs offered in the evenings at the Arctic College, for example, they will be credited for those courses towards their high school diploma. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the minister for that wonderful response. It's something I have been expecting for over 10 years now; something that I was actually working on with Agnico Eagle back around 2008, but the government of the day was not very supportive. I am glad this minister is supportive of doing something like that.

I would now like to ask the Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College some questions. He is brand new to this, I understand this, but I am wondering if he will give direction to his staff to ensure that the colleges are preparing for this dual credit system and to look at how they need to renovate or work on their community learning centres in the smaller communities?

We in the smaller communities are tired of the regional hubs. We in the smaller communities can do stuff in our community learning centres as well. The minister himself comes from a small community, so will he give direction to his staff to ensure his colleges are preparing for this? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to clarify to Ms. Nutarak's question before I get to Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Chairman, I support Ms. Nutarak's question in terms of having people stay where they live. It's hard for people in smaller communities to travel outside of their comfort zone of their communities.

Adult educators are our key positions that initiate and coordinate programs, support adult learners, and complete annual community needs assessments, and is the first point of contact for those who want information or access to college programs and services.

Mr. Chairman, the annual community needs assessments identify programs to be considered for delivery and is used to prepare for the upcoming academic year. So there is an option Nunavut Arctic College to expand to other smaller communities.

In terms of Mr. Simailak's question, I do understand the member is passionate about having mine training trades provided for his community, however, the mine training deliveries that are provided are third party funding which

requires extensive proposals and contributions that the college needs to find.

Also, Nunavut Arctic College is currently exploring options for the delivery of a six-week program to be delivered in community learning centres. The program would focus on math, science, and English reading, writing, and comprehension as part of Nunavut 3000, where we currently have the Skilled Trades Program and also offer the heavy equipment operator training simulators.

If the college has the human resources, office location like college space, and funding, these mine trainings can definitely be in the smaller communities. Also, the college does not only work itself to have mine training. It's a collaborative approach between Economic Development and Transportation, Family Services, and Education. We continue to have discussions in terms of providing more mine training across the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for your response. The Baker Lake community learning centre does have room availability. I believe there is one room that is still sitting empty and ready for use, year after year. I mentioned this numerous times now.

Community learning centres are shut down in the summertime, boarded up. We could be using that facility. I mentioned during your appearance in Committee of the Whole with your

department, the Arctic College, that one private company did secure third-party funding and they needed the community learning centre, but they kept getting barriers from the Nunavut Arctic College.

So if I can get clarification from the minister, you yourself: Will you give direction to your staff to make sure that community learning centres are open and ready for use because we do need, and I need my constituents to have to access to this reinvesting in education that this government is trying to push through.

So you as minister, you're the one responsible: will you direct your staff to work with every community to have access to your buildings, the community learning centres? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To answer the member's question, yes, I completely agree that we need our community learning centres to be open to have access to post-secondary education because the college is the only post-secondary institute in our territory.

I can commit to getting community learning centres to be more open to our community people across the territory, but it depends whether the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission allows for colleges to be open, but I agree with the member's question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. Just one last statement; I've only got a few seconds left. I appreciate the minister's response, he's brand new to this position and I apologize for coming out what appears to be aggressive maybe, but it is passion. It's something I've been working on for years. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: It's just a comment. Before going on to the next name, we will be having a 20-minute break.

>>Committee recessed at 15:05 and resumed at 15:28

Chairman: Welcome back, everyone. The next name on the list: Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My next line of questions will be for the Minister of Health and I would like to begin where I left off on the issue of enhancing and support school meal programs with community-based partners.

In the August mandate report on page 65, it states that "We are working together with Nunavut Tunngavik to develop a plan for a more standardized and universal school food program." I was very happy to hear about this. I would like to ask the minister to provide a little bit more information about progress in this area and more specifically when these discussions had started and any progress made since. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) Thanks for the question to the member on the food programs. Coming from the Department of Health's perspective, we know that food is important in terms of health outcomes and that includes for students. We know there is a positive impact if we can increase food security in terms of the physical and mental condition of the students.

Starting in '22-23, it was an interdepartmental working group that was formed. It also included Nunavut Tunngavik and it also included Family Services. What we're doing together is developing a project plan and working towards a business case in terms of looking at what Minister Gross had mentioned earlier, looking at increased federal funding for school food programming across the territory, and then also looking at establishing standards for food programming because right now, as Minister Gross mentioned, it can really vary from school to school. Some schools serve chicken noodle soup. Other schools are serving boiled caribou and bannock. It can be highly variable and so that's where we're at in terms of the interdepartmental work project plan and then the next step would be a business case. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the response from the minister. I'm very glad to hear about the interdepartmental working group, which includes NTI. Would you be able to indicate how far along the working group is on completing the project plan and when would it be

possible to have a business case completed and submitted to the federal government? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) The work is moving along. I don't have a definitive date that I can offer up in terms of when we can look forward to submitting the business case, but as Minister Gross mentioned, right now there are a number of different avenues where schools can access food programming.

Through the Department of Health, it's the Nunavut Wellness Agreement funds, which come through us, they go down to municipal governments, and then in each agreement by community by community, there will be allocations made for food programs, but then there is another stream that's available which the minister also mentioned, Inuit Child First Initiative. Some schools in Nunavut have been very successful in accessing that funding. However, my understanding is that there is quite a lot of paperwork required there in terms of the applications and the reporting, and so what we're looking at doing is doing a blanket application that would cover all the schools.

That's where I give credit to my colleague, working with our federal partners and using the opportunities that we do have to lobby them and to educate them in some cases about the realities of Nunavut. That's where those relationships can be really valuable and it's exciting, looking forward to what we could do and with our partners here interdepartmentally and also Nunavut

Tunngavik. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks again, Minister Main. This issue of standardized universal food programs in our schools is so important to the success of our youth and the future of Nunavut. I wish you luck as well as the entire interdepartmental working group and NTI in completing the business case and securing the much-needed funding to ensure that we can prevent children from going hungry in our schools.

I would like to move on to my next topic. The Department of Health plays a significant role in providing care to Nunavummiut and also has a significant role in the success of this mandate. Last spring, I raised concern when the Department of Health had reached an all-time high in the vacancy and over 50 percent of the positions were unfilled within the department. I would like to ask how this vacancy has impacted our health care system. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for the question. It has impacted the system in a big way. It has impacted Nunavummiut individually. It has impacted the implementation of our mandate to a certain extent. It has been a top concern of the department going right back to when we were meeting to draft our mandate back in Cambridge Bay in 2021.

If we look at a community health centre or any health facility, what we want to see is we want to see a strong team atmosphere, we want to see dedicated staff who are in their roles on an indeterminate basis, who are familiar with their surroundings and familiar with the people that they deal with, and those are the types of conditions or workforce environment that lead to the best health outcomes.

We have been impacted by changes in the health human resource field and there has been a shortage right across the country. We have been impacted like many of our neighbouring jurisdictions. It impacts care on a person-to-person basis. If you look at something like mental health services where it can be a very personal and sensitive area to have addressed, privacy concerns, there is a big benefit if there is a continuity of care in terms of who the client is and who is the care provider.

We have been doing our best to make sure that services are available. We have brought on more casual staff. We have gone to more agencies. We have brought on paramedics. All of these things have been done in order to make sure that health centres stay open, to make sure that the services are available, but there is no question that we need to get to a place where we have more indeterminate staff, where we're less reliant on contractors and short-term staff, and we are bringing forward measures to strengthen that.

There is more I could say, but I'll cut myself off there. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. Just to follow up on that topic of capacity within the department, would the minister be able to update us on the current situation? Have there been improvements since the March 31 employment report? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I'll just pull out my latest numbers here in terms of the staffing update. The most current numbers that I have in front of me are as of July 31 of this year, and we are currently running a 46 percent vacancy rate and so it has been a decrease of approximately 1 percent since the March numbers were released.

Mr. Speaker, I think I'm allowed to call you that...no, Mr. Chairman, the 46 percent is our reported vacancy rate, but I should qualify that that it doesn't mean that 46 percent of the positions are actually vacant. Those vacancies would be filled by either casual or relief staff in many cases. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Moving on to my next question, one of the actions under enabling health and healing is to expand education and training programs that provide Nunavummiut with the necessary qualifications for professional and paraprofessional work in health care, mental health and addictions treatment. I was wondering if the minister would be able to provide an update on progress

made in that area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) There has been progress on a number of different fronts. When it comes to our work with Nunavut Arctic College, they're a valued partner. We've had the Nursing Program here in Iqaluit for a number of years. For the first time, Nunavut Arctic College is delivering a licensed practical nursing course in Rankin Inlet. That's exciting to see.

We finished developing the Personal Support Worker Program with Nunavut Arctic College and that was piloted and delivered to students in four communities. Now we're working with Nunavut Arctic College to see the first in-person delivery of that course and that's more specifically looking to Rankin Inlet for that. I'm happy to see that the college has secured funding for the next couple of years to deliver that program. It's going to be important when we're looking at needs around long-term care.

There are a number of different initiatives within the Department of Health that are also meant to strengthen our workforce; I'll just mention two. The mental health paraprofessional positions that we have created where the positions are ladderized, so there are four different positions and those are targeted specifically for Nunavut Inuit. I believe we have 27 out of 31 paraprofessionals currently are Inuit and it's really exciting because those paraprofessionals support the mental health professionals at the community level.

A second thing I wanted to mention was our Basic Radiological Technician Program, or BRT program. That's one that's within the department and it's targeted at training. There are several different modules of training for our staff where it allows them to take on greater roles within health centres. We're having great success with that program, so it's really exciting. We're looking at additional opportunities that we can model on that one. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate the minister's response. It was very great to hear about these new initiatives.

The way that I see it, training Inuit in professional and paraprofessional positions or careers will take a multi-pronged approach. Of course, we all recognize how difficult it is to leave home and it is very important to utilize our community learning centres as much as possible, but as the minister had indicated, the laboratory requirements restrict NAC from delivering many programs in community learning centres. That's where the regional hubs come into play to provide the more specialized programming. Again, Arctic College is very limited in the ability to expand and take on new areas of learning.

I do recognize that the college has run specialized programs such as the law program, but there are so many different careers that we need to train Inuit into. That is where the third prong comes into play and that's out-of-territory training. I'm very glad to hear about the basic

radiological tech program and the modules that you're providing for employees because that's something that I was going to recommend. A lot of our youth leave the territory for post-secondary education, but it is very challenging, especially when it's the first time living independently, and providing additional indirect supports to those students is essential to the success of reaching our representative public service target.

I wanted to put this forward for consideration to the minister. I did bring this up earlier during the sitting with regard to training paramedics. Recognizing that we don't have the capacity to provide these additional programs in territory, such as dental hygienist, paramedic, or pharmacy technician, these are positions we need across the territory but we can't provide the training in territory, so I would like to ask the minister to consider doing some sort of outreach to determine how many Nunavummiut would be interested in taking these programs out of territory with additional assistance.

The law program came at a great cost and I think that organizing a group of students in a program in a gateway city would be much more cost effective and you would still be able to provide the cost of housing, the cost of food, and it would still be cheaper and it would speed up the education of Nunavummiut. I would like to ask the minister if he would consider doing some outreach and seeing how many Inuit Nunavummiut would be interested in participating in an organized out-of-territory post-secondary program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I thank the member for the suggestion.

In terms of the paramedic function in Nunavut right now, it's relatively recent that we brought paramedics on and made them a part of our teams across Nunavut. I believe we have seen paramedics working in every community in Nunavut, except Chesterfield Inlet, if memory serves me. Right now it's a contracted service and that being said, it would seem to make sense that if it is going to be a contracted service or a need going forward, we need to put efforts into looking at how we can make sure Inuit are getting employed within that.

I can commit to looking into that along with my colleague. I'm not sure if it would be out of the territory. I might be looking at it with one of my other colleagues here, but I can commit to looking into that. I mean, the Nursing Program that I mentioned earlier with Nunavut Arctic College, I'm really happy to share that we have formalized kind of a pathway for the Nunavut Arctic College nursing grads to come into the department and to working for the department. That was something that was flagged as a potential area that needed improvement.

We have now formalized what's called the Graduate Nursing Residence Program where students that come out of Nunavut Arctic College who have yet to pass their licensing exam, depending on if they pass their exam or if they don't pass their exam, there are pathways for them into the department and we look to

support them through the transition from student to employee. That's something that's really exciting to us because we want to make sure that we capture but that we attract every one of those Nunavut Arctic College grads. I'm thankful again to Nunavut Arctic College for that program. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: The next name on my list, Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you for recognizing me again, Mr. Chairman. I would like to direct my question to the member who was a regular member before, to the Minister of Culture and Heritage. I believe he will understand my question.

I would like to ask about the eight Inuit principles, and they were recognized in written form, in the previous government. In this new, sixth government, they have included Inuit culture within the government programs and systems they have *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* principles, *Tunnganarniq*, negotiation, training, practising, working with and supporting each other, and considering, and taking care of our environment. This government has stated that they would use Inuit traditional knowledge, culture, to be recognized and incorporated into programs.

With that, my question is: What steps have you taken to initiate Inuit language use as it's a very important language and it is the Inuit language. When an Inuk speaks they talk about societal values and that's part of their societal values. English is an official language and Inuit language is an official language with this

government. What have you achieved with this? That's my question to the minister. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Culture and Heritage, Mr. Kaernerck.

Hon. Joelle Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your question. There are 10 Inuit societal values. When I first came here in the Sixth Assembly, we were working together, treating everybody equally, negotiating, and working with each other and training. I worked very hard to make sure that these are recognized as societal values.

Within the last two years, the Department of Culture and Heritage has continually sought work on how we can recognize Inuit language and have it be used. We have been working continually with the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs looking at the policies. Our elders had traditional rules to treat everybody equally and nicely so that you will be treated fairly as well. I believe in those. The Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajiit, prior to bills being accepted, the Department of Culture and Heritage looked at the terminology in the legislation as to how we can utilize Inuit language in the legislation. We hold Inuktitut programs, for example, the Department of Health has the doctors and nurses orientated so as to recognize Inuit knowledge and culture. That's one issue that we have been working on to date.

Perhaps 56 percent of staff have completed Inuit language training, using 56 percent, there are approximately 165 individuals. That's how we have worked with traditional culture and language. In

fiscal year 2024, we'll have the same plan to make sure that this program of traditional knowledge and culture will be further recognized in Nunavut, and within our government mandate. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the member for his clarification, or response to my question. Nonetheless, with the Inuktitut language as the reasoning, we have Inuit in our population who prefer Inuktitut being spoken. The CBC held a televised phone-in show, or actually it was a survey shown.

This is how the situation has played out, and we need to strengthen and have a strong linguistic base, and have it become a welcoming experience. Due to that reason, I want to ask the minister during our session this fall some days there have been discernable cases where it is very obvious.

I want to ask you if this year or next, if the department can plan a survey. As the minister, will a review be considered or study on the status of the Inuit language, and to have a timed session to determine the difference between having something explained in Inuktitut or English? There should be a study done on language use in the House with the Inuktitut language to make sure that it's settled properly and is welcomed without any worries in using the language in the House. I would like to know if that can be looked into. Can there be a study done to see if it takes longer to describe something in Inuktitut or in English?

There should be a comparison of the two times it takes to say the same thing. That's my question: Can you initiate that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chairman: Minister Kaerner.

Hon. Joelle Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your question. The *Inuit Language Protection Act* is there to preserve the language. Any employee should be able to speak Inuktitut, and we have to increase the usage of the Inuktitut language at the workplace. We have the *Inuit Language Protection Act*, and I've been reading up on the Act, and again, in the House, we also have problems with the policies, with possibly the Speaker, or at a full caucus meeting.

Maybe we can speed up the process. It's outlined very well in the *Inuit Language Protection Act*. The Inuktitut language has to be recognized at the workplace, which also includes the Nunavut Legislative Assembly.

It's quite hard, but it's possible. Looking at Nunavut, we all speak Inuktitut in our own community, and I believe the *Inuit Language Protection Act* can be applied. I believe we'll have to get approval, possibly at a full caucus meeting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know whether you answered my question or not, but I'll keep going. Can you include the elders to be given the opportunity to be within the government?

Can you include an elder advisor within the government? I think that it would be very helpful because they would give you the full information and advice on everything. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Kaerner.

Hon. Joelle Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the member for reiterating your question. I can agree to revisit this issue. Additionally, the Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit can be used for that purpose, especially for cases like yours surrounding our practices, our language as the body is fully recognized.

The Inuit Language Authority can deal with most of these issues, along with the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajit, who can provide resources or can provide advisors and what you stated, about our elders having previously being the leaders of the camps.

I acknowledge that this needs to be fully accepted. I can accept that suggestion, and I will try to work really hard to make it a reality over the next two upcoming years. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, we also have witnesses at the witness table with the auditors and so on.

Can we also invite elder advisors to talk about traditional leadership because they are representing Inuit to give us advice on leadership and how we can improve our representation of Inuit? If we can set up a council of elders to give us advice,

elders are able and wise. Give them a voice, not only here but also within the government. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Kaerner.

Hon. Joelle Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that question. Yes, we'd like to see elders participating and to give us advice on leadership. I will look into it and see what can possibly be done because we have *Qanuqtuuqatigiinniq*, which is exactly what we would do, training and so on, and not just pay lip service to the Inuktitut language. I believe we can do that, I could consider it and see what we can do through *Qanuqtuuqatigiinniq*. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to say thank you right up to the last second. I would like to see something like this happening, and we have to include those eight principles. Thank you for giving me an opportunity.

Chairman: Minister Kaerner.

Hon. Joelle Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The IQ committee can also be involved through working together, and we also have youth councils that can also be involved. We're not only talking about the Nunavut Legislative Assembly, we're including all the government departments. I just wanted to make that addition, and thank you very much for your suggestion. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a supplement to a question because at that time, I didn't get the response about bullying in schools. The minister indicated that they have setup tracking violence in our schools.

Could you elaborate further and tell us what you mean by tracking, and how it decreases the number of bullying in the schools and how you're going to apply it? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank the member for the question. I think I caught all of the member's question about the violence tracking reporting system. Last October, we had a violent tracking reporting system that was launched, and the intent of the system is to record and track trends of violent incidents to inform policy making, and also to respond to those incidents.

For privacy reasons, we don't record personal or family information about individuals when they are recorded within the tracking system. We will look at that data and compare and collect information we have on our schools, such as the size of the school, if there's overcrowding, also the student to educator ratio, vacant staff positions, attendance and type of family engagement. All of this will help us best to determine our best practices and to identify gaps in our services.

This tool isn't used to deal or address with individual issues, it's done at a school level, and we're encouraging our school leaders to use this tracking and it

doesn't just have to be a teacher or principal that reports incidents, it can be a bus driver or hallway monitor or others, even parents, if they do have concerns. They won't be the one to input the information, it will be done with the school's principal, but there are different avenues for the information to be collected, and it's not just for the educators to use. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Students plan for their future, but the ones that do bullying in the schools, what plans do you have for the bullies? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for the question. The member was asking about what we do for they bullies. We always want to ensure that if there is bullying happening that it is being addressed first and foremost. We have mechanisms and training that our school leaders participate in to learn how to deal with situations that might be escalated or involve bullying and how to prevent bullying. We ask that our school staff participate in those training opportunities through their professional development days that happen at our schools.

We have a number of days for our instructors to participate through the Canadian Red Cross, and we partner with them to deliver training, I believe it is quarterly to our staff when they do want to take it. We ask for them to learn about ways to deal with situations if they do arise, and how to deal with them

specifically. We always want to ensure that we're working to mitigate situations, so if they do happen, we have the students work in certain times with their parents and families to ensure that if there is any information in regard to attendance or anything like that, if that becomes a concern that we can work to ensure that both sides are properly addressed. If there is any mediation or anything like that, that it is dealt with the families as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The curriculum for the higher grades, are they standardized all across Nunavut? I would like to know that. From grade 10-12, have all of their curriculum been standardized all across Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, to the member for that correct question. The Department of Education follows the Alberta curriculum, so we do have a standardized curriculum that we do follow for our schools.

We are in the process of developing a bilingual education for Nunavummiut, and we are starting on our K-6, which is our earlier years where we're working on this curriculum that will be standardized and incorporate *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* from the foundational years all the way through to graduation. This is a 20-year plan for resource development and assessment, and also educator training in all subject areas.

As we're going through the curriculum development, we are working as well to ensure that the Nunavut Teacher Education Program students are versed in this new curriculum that is coming forward, and we're at different stages for each subject. We have curriculum that's being developed in all subject areas, and I look forward to that implementation.

It's a phased approach, so it won't just happen overnight, we are starting use the curriculum in our schools and getting feedback from teachers on some of the curriculum that is developed. We are working to strengthen the curriculum for Nunavummiut in our schools. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The reason I asked the question is the students in school in grade 10, I was sent some of their school work, and some of them were at a grade 5 level. That's not acceptable. (interpretation ends) We want them to have a good education, and (interpretation) that really needs to be corrected, the curriculum has to be strengthened so that we want our students to learn properly and not be intimidated when they're trying to learn. That is more of a general comment, and I would like to move on to another minister, to the Minister responsible for Suicide Prevention.

My colleague from Netsilik asked questions about the Suicide Prevention Strategy. That's been worked on for a very long time now, and the ministers and former Premier, Peter Taptuna said suicide is in a crisis in Nunavut.

Can the minister tell us if it's another time, the time has come again that there is a crisis in Nunavut with suicide? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister responsible for Suicide Prevention, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to my colleague for asking the question. It is true what the member is saying, the strategy. I'll speak English. (interpretation ends) The Suicide Prevention Strategy has been in place for a number of years, and it's the action plans. The action plan that we're working on right now, so the last action plan was in place for a period of five years, this action plan, which is very close to being finalized, between the partners will guide our actions for the next five years.

In terms of the statistics, the statistics are troubling. We did see some changes in numbers, suicides during COVID public health restrictions, all kinds of Nunavummiut behaviours changed during those years. I think, looking at the numbers, we can say that suicide is still a huge concern for our territory. It's still way beyond where it should be if we were on the same footing as the rest of Canada, looking at average numbers per population. The numbers inform our behaviour, they inform our response, and we need to continue offering more supports, more initiatives, and more opportunities for Nunavummiut to get help.

I mentioned a few things in response to MLA for Netsilik around what initiatives that have come forward. If the member wants me to be more specific with

numbers, I can, but that will be my response at this point. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we first got elected to the House, there were young people coming into the House, and they wanted action. Our Premier said at that time in the House, we hear you, but no action. I don't know how else we can tell people out there, the young people were here in the House and they wanted action. (interpretation ends) I don't know what else, how to express it stronger. Every Nunavummiut is possibly affected by suicide. We want action now. (interpretation) Our youth (interpretation ends) they're dying of suicide.

(interpretation) Not just young people, even adults are dying of suicide. I don't know how to express this. I would like to ask the minister when before Nunavut got into a crisis or emergency, and are the suicide numbers higher now, or what are the numbers now? I'm thinking of previous Legislative Assemblies.

Chairman: Minister Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, to my colleague for asking the question. (interpretation ends) In terms of the numbers, I can get into the specifics here; just give me a second here. I apologize, I'm having difficulty finding the exact numbers in terms of the prevalence of suicide, I believe the member wanted me to compare from before, when it was declared a crisis until now. The member did mention

action, and I totally agree that we do need to take action; we are.

There are a number of different fronts that we're working on. One, we discussed earlier, was through the Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy, all the actions that are included in there, working with our partners. We are working to strengthen delivery of mental health promotion activities, as well as counselling activities across Nunavut.

We're working with non-profit organizations across Nunavut on mobile trauma response teams, which come in to support communities after tragic events happen that's in response to requests.

We provide funding through our Upigivatsi Suicide Prevention Initiatives funding, over \$3 million a year, that's flowing right across the territory.

We have the Atii Angutiit program, which is targeting men across Nunavut, and the idea of that program is not just to go in and do an event and then leave, it's to go in, do an event, and then foster a local group within each community and to give them ongoing support.

Other work that we're doing is focused on youth, I mentioned in my opening comments. There are a number of different fronts, as well as the addictions and trauma treatment system in Nunavut, which includes Aqqusariaq. It also includes on-the-land treatment in all three regions of Nunavut, and it also includes work to support developing a mental health workforce, particularly looking at getting more Inuit into the field.

I agree with the member that we do need action, and I understand where the member's coming from. We are taking steps forward, and we're going to need to take more. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The comments from the minister, we need to be more informed in Nunavut, and the support programs that exist, when we're struggling, we sometimes have nowhere to turn to. At times, it gets hard to figure out where to ask for help. If we can have more communication for whomever may be struggling, and we all go through these phases. We should promote the service, and to support suicide prevention, but it needs to be better known that there is support. At times, when you're struggling, you forget about the support services. Just a comment for the minister that suicide prevention is important.

I want to move to a different issue, fisheries minister. For (interpretation ends) tourism sector (interpretation ends) either in the Baffin, Kivalliq or Kitikmeot, where are they working under the *Katujjiluta* mandate? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: My apologies. Minister David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The various aspects of fisheries, for example, which sector is more active, I cannot say. I know the Nunavut Development Corporation in Cambridge Bay sell fish, also to our store over here. In Rankin Inlet, there is a food processing plant

that processes food and sells country food items. In the Baffin, turbot shrimp fisheries are more active currently, and currently in the House, 2023-28 plans, there is an outline of where we want to take the industry as a government, in the upcoming years that you mentioned. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It seems the minister is looking at the regional hubs, not the small communities. Is that the way I understand it? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Not at all, the fisheries that we purchased at those hubs, they primarily catch their fish, not just from their communities; the various communities provide fish for the commercial fisheries. There are lakes identified for these purposes, for commercial fishing, and that is the avenue we harvest fish. This is for arctic char, and also, if we process deep sea fishery, we go to Newfoundland or Greenland to offload our loads, and this provides no value for employment on the fisheries. Perhaps Qikiqtarjuaq would be a hub for the Nunavut waters to offload in Nunavut and be processed in Nunavut.

I also mentioned earlier the Community Freezer Program and Nutrition North, and the country food is open to all communities that want to take part. In Taloyoak, that too is active for all residents. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for clarifying that. It seems, reading it that it's only at the regional hubs. I would now like to ask the Premier, can the Premier direct his ministers that there are 25 communities, that mandate is for all of Nunavut? Perhaps the Premier can give direction that all communities should benefit and to outline the programs that are benefitting the smaller communities, and that we can report that progress. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for the question. Currently, we have been informing when we started in Cambridge Bay to be open for the work, and the direction that we are going that we wanted to be open about this.

When we looked at it in the House, last year we looked at the benefits to Nunavut, and that we want to provide reports, we started last year and that we are working to outline the accomplishments, and that we will provide annually a report to the House. Currently, before we started sitting on the first day, we gave two reports for two years that we had been doing for all communities that we are working with.

I can say too that the executive is always thinking of the smaller communities, and also other priorities that we rely on as a whole territory. We know there are 25 communities, and we feel for them, I hear what you're saying. I thank you for pushing this issue, and I agree with you

on the smaller communities have to benefit, but we do provide reports, we will provide an annual report as well to the work that's been done to date. You can expect more substance from that report, thank you for the direction. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I mostly ask again, because the small communities do not receive their fair share, although they want to participate fully, and that they aren't listened to. I don't even know how else to push this issue. Through the Department of Health, the minister, for the smaller communities that aren't involved for the two communities that I represent, they have one identified and the larger communities have a lot of projects going on, that is not too good to see as a smaller community, not receiving their fair share. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: That's just a comment. Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the member. I agree with you totally that we need to help smaller communities, and I thank you for this direction. The need to support our smaller communities, that we are doing many projects, and the projects that the ministers are mentioning and also saying things that are benefitting all the communities in the territory, and the work that we are doing. For example, when we're building houses, I'm very happy that for the first time, some communities will be receiving new houses. They haven't had houses built,

including your community. I just bring this up as an example, I take your comments seriously and that the smaller communities do have to be involved, and we do note that we have another two years and that they will be a part of our priorities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Last name on my list, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question directed to the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation. On page 67, second paragraph, in the smaller communities that there's more programs set and I'm sure there are more work in the smaller communities that we establish. Are you talking about the smaller communities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. My correspondence seems to be all the same, but I'm trying to look for the right page number quickly. On page 67, we have established employment opportunities in all the communities.

In English, we provide (interpretation ends) grants and contributions (interpretation) to the communities and where they have gone. I will table the report annually as to how far they have gone and what kind of employment opportunities arise. So, we make a report annually and this reporting will continue. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd like to ask you a question in regard to Baker Lake. Do you know anything about Baker Lake being involved or included in this program? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): I don't have detailed information but I know that in Baker Lake because the community has been closest to the mining sector and they have worked very hard and looking at the community and it's recognizable that the employment opportunities are arising from the mining sector, not from the government.

The individual who negotiated land claims has come up with different programs and services in the community of Baker Lake and we provide support and the programs we have such as grants and contributions, we provide those programs to the communities and we also work with Inuit entities and federal government. By working together, when they provide funding so we look for ways how we can provide support to the communities.

However, in regard to the member's question in regard to his community, I can tell you that the community itself has developed through these programs and I'm very proud of them and it seems like that the private businesses are being developed in the community. We keep seeing that and we'll try and provide support continually and I'm sure that the other communities can look at the Baker Lake community as a role model

because I'm very proud of that community.

Going to that community, there are less Government of Nunavut workers than the private company workers and I like to see that occur in all of Nunavut where there are employment opportunities and have a good workforce. I thank the member for coming to my office and providing his concerns to me and providing report on the progress of the community. I work very closely with him and I appreciate him for that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister. Perhaps let me ask another question on diversifying economy, I'd like to get an understanding how we can develop further in Baker Lake in facilities such as Jessie Oonark facility but that belongs to the government but Nunavut Development Corporation... I know that Agnico Eagle Mines will be closing in 2026. What are your plans in this regard in regard to Jessie Oonark Ltd. for example, how would you utilize that building? What could Baker Lake people do to enhance this? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the fact that Nunavut Development Corporation board runs that facility very well or successfully. I know that they have few properties in the communities and I encourage them.

Within this week, they received a letter of expectation and they got another board member last month during the meeting last month, and I spoke with them and encouraged them to achieve a development what they're working on other issues. As a minister for this department, I'm able to provide encouragement and I will continue to do that.

With the mining sector closing in the community of Baker Lake, the mining industry are still looking for mines or ores so that they could utilize that mine if they can find additional ore and I expect to have their business develop and I know that Baker Lake community is in support of them and I like that because this a positive thing and it was very expensive to construct. It will help the community develop and the Inuit so I will be continue to encourage Agnico Eagle Mines Limited to find more ore so that many employees will not lose their employment.

As a government, we try to plan ahead when a mine closes what we should as the Government of Nunavut and the federal government and do more training or move on to another mining industry, so we need to do proper planning on that.

If they were able to find additional ore that it would be ideal because mining always stops. Our Premier has told me to work on diversifying economy and looking at all the opportunities and we'll be renewing the programs and fisheries has been renewed and also tourism. We will be working on the tourism sector and I will be asking for your support when we start planning on those. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. This facility, Jessie Oonark Ltd, they would like to see it utilized again. At this time, in between the week, it's only open during the day from Monday to Friday, and 10-4 and in the evening and during Saturday, they should be working on those days. Has the minister considered these aspects? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. They operate and the people who've known about this, I would like to see this facility operate, Jessie Oonark facility, and if we can improve it and I encourage the board to make improvements. I have consulted with the board, and their operations are run by the board. Our staff are listening to the proceedings, so I encourage them to work on these, and they work at arms-length because they know better, at the local level, what requires to be open longer times, and I thank the member for his question in regard to this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Speaking English now. On page 73, one of my member colleagues asked a bit about this on the last bullet since we allocated funding under the country food distribution program to community food bank, non-profit based in Rankin Inlet to distribute country food in the Kivalliq region.

Sorry if I missed it earlier. I'm wondering what was sent out of Rankin Inlet to which communities, when, and is it still ongoing? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) For the Country Food Distribution Program, we table this on an annual basis, so with that tabling, I would leave those details within those tabled documents, I don't have in front of me exactly whether if it's still ongoing or not, it's something that I'll definitely commit to providing the details to this House and that those details would be there.

As for the mid-term review, this was a snapshot of what we've done, this is just one of many things under the country food distribution program that initiatives that were done within our term, and something that it's one that I'm happy to report any other progress that's taking place under that program. Within the preview of this review, I don't have those details, but I tabled it on an annual basis, and I also will be happy to report to the member directly for those details. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for the response. I was kind of expecting a snapshot, and for the minister to be able to further clarify what the snapshot entails, but I do look forward to finding out more information about the country food program.

Let me give this minister a one-minute break. (interpretation) I will move on to the Minister of Environment. Few days ago, I asked in regard to caribou management.

The federal government has been concerned about the caribou population, as we are aware that the wolves hunt caribou, and we know that there is a bounty on wolves, but in Kivalliq, the bounty price is very low, and I believe in Kugluktuk, the wolf bounty is \$900, but in Kivalliq, the bounty is \$500. Is the minister looking into this to see if you can increase the bounty for Kivalliq harvesters? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Environment, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for that question. For the Wolf Sample Collection Program, it started off with a \$300 collection of the skull, hair and the harvest information and when the minister of the day made a policy for that Wolf Sample Collection Program, it got increased to \$500 across the Nunavut communities.

For the caribou herd that are of special concern which are the Bathurst, Bluenose-East, and the Dolphin-Union, those areas are harvested within the communities of Kugluktuk and Cambridge Bay. As of right now, that policy is \$500,000 annual budget for this program and it's a standalone program that I foresee that it will be for many years.

It's great to have that program that is helping the recovery of those herds that

are affected by natural causes also harvesting and other factors.

To answer the member's question, that detail information is not readily available for me to present. Once I start updating the policy, the Department of Environment can further look into whether we can increase the sample collection program in this area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the minister. I would like to ask my next question to the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, he may be tired of sitting.

On page 79, (interpretation ends) progressing continued where I'm going to speak English now. There are community consultations, feasibility studies being done on an all season road connecting the Kivalliq communities. Looking for some meetings planned in 2024, the minister responded that one of my questions few days ago.

I'm wondering; there have already been numerous consultations done in the Kivalliq in regard to this Kivalliq inter-community road that's being proposed. What's different for 2024 that hasn't already been learned in the past consultations? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What is different is that

through those consultations, our consultants were able to prepare for the engineering and the design where the roads would be connecting, how they would be connecting, and what those barriers are. In the 2024, it's going to be, "Here's what we heard and here's what it's looking like," and if this is a good thing for the Kivalliq or a bad thing. What are the pros and cons if you take what's being proposed by the consultants?

That will have the public able to make that informed decision and informed input into the study. Once the study is done, then that's going to help us go to the next level, which I hope that it will lead to building those roads, but all to say is we need to hear from the public and the work has been progressing over the year. From my perspective, this is in the final stages, which I'm very excited and eager to receive that report. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. My own personal opinion, it's a great initiative that should be expedited on. My children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren and future great-grandchildren could have quick weekend tournaments.

My next line of questioning on the same page, the second-last bullet, "We are implementing the Fishing and Sealing Strategy," I brought this up a couple of times now already. Baker Lake doesn't have any sealing availability. Have you looked at doing something with caribou skins and, if not, why not? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we have and that's the wonderful work through our Nunavut Development Corporation. They've had to try to sell caribou fur and experiment on how to utilize that and I will continue to encourage the Nunavut Development Corporation for starting this market. It's one that although it's not in this strategy, it's in my other functions and other roles that are to promote the market and I'm very committed to doing that. I think that what you have been saying is resonating to the work that our development corporation is doing. I thank the member for raising this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. In the last bullet on the same page, to the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, they're working with the Nunavut Development Corporation at the Winnipeg Art Gallery whose shop ships worldwide. I'm wondering: how is that being further utilized with the Kivallirmiut because we're closest to Winnipeg? If you can elaborate a bit more on that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As a government, we have a memorandum of understanding with the Winnipeg Art Gallery on a number of fronts. I believe that there are artists that are actually there now or soon to be that are coming from the Kivalliq that will be able to showcase their work and also sell them. What this online shop... .

(interpretation) I can't pronounce this properly, but you said it quite well. (interpretation ends) That's there to promote our artists and funnel it within a much known gallery that's able to distribute Inuit art. I think the Kivalliq has the most to benefit from it because, as you mentioned, Winnipeg is right there, but it's to help all Inuit artists to get another form of ways to sell their art.

I have to say sadly that our Nunavut Arts and Crafts Association is not functional at the moment, but our department has undertaken to try to promote more of the arts and crafts, and I hope that one day and one of my ambitions is to have some form of association that's going to help promote our arts and crafts because those are a very valued commodity that we haven't focused our efforts on right now, but it's one through our mandate is to promote that with the Premier and everybody as we need to lead the diversifying the economy. That's one sector that I think we can see something really fast. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation) Thank you, minister. I'd like to ask a different minister, at this point for the Minister of Housing. In Baker Lake, there is a satellite campus of Piquisilivik. How is it included in *Katujjiluta*? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I didn't catch the whole question, I heard Minister of Housing.

Can the member please repeat, please?
Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak, can you repeat your question? Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That'd be a dialectal difference here. I'll do it in English.

My next question is to the Minister Responsible for Nunavut Arctic College. Baker Lake does have the Piqqusilirivvik satellite campus, I'm wondering how *Katujjiluta* mandate is working with the Piqqusilirivvik satellite campus? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Responsible for Nunavut Arctic College, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that question. The satellite programming is in relation to Piqqusilirivvik on cultural centre that is located at Clyde River. For the community of Baker Lake to be involved in that satellite programming, the program provides high school students from K to 12 that are involved with elders to be taught courses that are related to our culture, like traditional wellbeing on health care practices, traditional making tools, traditional hunting tool practices, and also sewing hunting clothes that are used culturally in our territory.

There are some other programs that they do offer like small engine repairs and also drum dancing and singing that are provided from that program to satellite program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll go over to the Minister of Culture and Heritage now, same thing on the same line of questioning for the Piqqusilirivvik cultural school.

(interpretation) How is the minister going to support the Piqqusilirivvik programs in Baker Lake because we are not supposed to lose our culture especially our young people have to be taught the culture and there are adults that are out there too and elders are diminishing in numbers. It's critical now that they be involved so I'd like to ask the minister: How is the minister going to help the situation? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Culture and Heritage, Mr. Kaernerck.

Hon. Joelle Kaernerck (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the question. This is part of the *Katujjiluta* mandate, that is a priority, and I, as a minister, will be able to see and review. The culture is very strong in Baker Lake. I cannot sometimes understand your dialect and that you made me understand that our culture has differences and I agree with the question. Within the *Katujjiluta* mandate is in there, I will look at it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister's been a MLA for a long time. I wonder what else he thinks that they could do. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Kaernerck.

Hon. Joelle Kaerner (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have been a minister for two weeks, I'm sorry, but I too will definitely work towards the parties of the department and in the two weeks that we have been sitting in the House, and I have a couple portfolios but I will keep at it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. I have no more names on my list. And I recognize the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Mr. Chairman, thank you. Two items I want to add to my comments from earlier, maybe because I wanted to say so much and mentioned all the priorities that we're working on. I mentioned ten cargo hauling facilities in the airports that would be deal with freight. Correctly, approved are seven, not ten.

In terms of the fisheries, in this day, I did not include the Pangnirtung Inshore Fisheries that provides the most fish in the territory for sale. I wanted to mention those two. Thank you for allowing me to provide the addition, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. I recognize Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I haven't quite decided who I'm going to start with, however, I know the subject that I'd like to address right now. I'm just following up on some earlier questions about the issue of suicide in Nunavut.

I'd just like to give a brief trigger warning because I will be sharing a ranges and I know that there are families

and communities who will recognize their loved ones in those ranges and I do so with utmost with that.

Mr. Chairman, what we know is that in 2015, there was a coroner's inquest into the issue of suicide in Nunavut and the biggest outcome of that, the biggest recommendation from the jury was that Nunavut shall immediately declare suicide a public health emergency, and what we know is that it was declared a crisis at the time and at that time, the first Minister Responsible for Suicide Prevention was actually the Member from Iqaluit-Sinaa.

In 2015 and 2016, they lost 32 people each year who took their own lives; in 2017, 25 people took their own lives; in 2018, 29 people took their own lives; in 2019, 39 people left this earth; in 2020, 25 people left their families; and up to November 2021, 36 people were lost. Between 2015 and 2019, the age ranges of people who took their own lives were 12 to 63 years old. In 2020 and 2021, the age range was 10 to 55 years old. We often look at suicide as an issue that mainly affects youth and what we know is it affects everybody. Every single age range is impacted by that.

In November of the year we were elected, I think everybody will recall that a number of youth from Inuksuk High School came and protested and walked into our Assembly. At the time, the member from Iqaluit-Niaqunnguut said to the youth that protested, "I want every one of you to know that we heard you loud and clear." He also stated, "...governments were able to mobilize very quickly. They were able to provide support to ensure safety" about the pandemic response. He also stated that

the response to suicide needs to be similar.

We can't go back and parse out why any government might have declared a crisis instead of a public health emergency. However, what we do know is that response to COVID-19 was a result of declaring a public health emergency. With the declaration of a public health emergency, calling a state of emergency, I'm going to quote Padma Suramala, who was the chief coroner that oversaw the coroner's inquest in 2015. She said, "Calling a state of emergency will kick in more resources, more funding and dedicated people working on the issue." She followed that by saying, "I did...my part. It's now in the government's hands, and it is in the public's eyes."

We have to ask ourselves, "What is the cost of failure to eradicate suicide in Nunavut?" The cost is every single one of those lives that I talked about in those statistics. They are real people. They are real human beings.

I'll ask the Minister of Health who, in October of this year, said that a new strategy that is currently in the planning stages will follow a more targeted approach to suicide. I would like to know from Minister Main whether or not that targeted approach includes declaring a public health emergency about suicide so that we can bring every single resource possible to stem the flow of the loss of life of Nunavummiut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the

member for asking that question. The Member for Aivilik asked for some numbers earlier. In the years that have passed, in 2021 there were 37 suicides and in 2022 there were 27 suicides. We know that this is a priority and the urgent nature of it and that we have to work hard in this area. We are aware and we know that this is a very deep subject in terms of trying to deal with it. The Department of Health is not the one to hold this issue. There are many factors connected through the various departments in the government.

(interpretation ends) To the member's question in terms of the upcoming Suicide Prevention Strategy five-year action plan, whether we will include a public health emergency, I can't say because the plan hasn't been finalized, but in terms of wanting to see additional resources put towards this issue, additional supports, I am a strong believer that we do need to provide additional supports. I think the questions that will be answered through the action plan, which has been developed not just by government but also non-governmental partners, is in how do we do, what do we do, when do we do it, and what are the different tools.

I think, in comparing the COVID pandemic to suicide, in some ways, COVID was easier to deal with than suicide is because it was detectable and we had tests for it. We had vaccines that were developed and I'm not saying that suicide can't be addressed, it can, but it's a vicious problem that we have and it's something that we need to continue working hard on. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister alluded to a very well-known health professional idiom which is what do you know, when did you know, and what did you do about it, and that's what leads good health care and it's very important.

To me, having worked for so long as a public servant in the Department of Health carrying many different responsibilities, over the years, many of those responsibilities were cross-sectioned on the issue of suicide. I worked closely with some really excellent public health professionals and I learned a lot from them.

I vividly recall the very human internal discussions that occurred at the time where the jury so bravely and smartly demanded that suicide be declared a public health emergency. What those health professionals told me was that calling a public health emergency might not save somebody tomorrow, it might not save somebody next week or even next month, but it does have the potential to bring the resources to us. At the time, it was part of my job to work on these issues.

I felt like all of those really good and knowledgeable, well-educated and caring people, that my job was important because I had the potential... .

Chairman: Ms. Brewster, your time is up. Do you wish to continue? Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I felt that I had with my colleagues the opportunity to cause tangible change and tangible solutions. As the Premier actually stated on

November 17, 2021 on this issue, he committed to that.

There was a small wave of grief that passed through us as public servants because we knew we had these very important jobs to do and an immense opportunity slipped out of our hands. An immense opportunity to gain more traction to access more expertise slipped away and it hurt because what we knew was that with additional resources, whether those are, very importantly, human resources, whether those resources were put towards systemic issues like surveillance, whether those resources were actually financial resources that we could flow into communities for public health programming and prevention. They all slipped away and it didn't make sense to those of us who saw it on a daily basis, trying to figure out what we could do better as public servants.

Right now I am imploring the Minister of Health to do the right thing and immediately declare suicide a public health emergency. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I'm unsure how to respond. I mean, do I think that additional resources are warranted into this? Yes. Do I believe that this is a priority that we need to address? Yes.

In terms of declaring a public health emergency, I don't know if I have the authority to unilaterally declare that as a minister, but I can commit to looking into that and discussing it with not just

the public health officials but including mental health officials within my department.

This is such a heavy topic and I really thank the member for raising it and it's one that we have to keep coming back to and keep pushing on collectively. As I mentioned earlier, it's very interconnected to other issues like the member raised, I believe it was this week or last week, the connection between child sexual abuse and suicide attempts or mental health issues, that connection between childhood trauma and poor outcomes later in life. When we look at the work that's being done by Family Services and partners to Family Services, it's some of the work that will pay off, I believe. It may not pay off immediately in terms of reducing suicide in Nunavut, but it is part of what needs to happen.

In terms of our work on the action plan, the United for Life Summit in 2022, stakeholders in Cambridge Bay highlighted a bunch of different connected issues, including child sexual abuse, housing, poverty, and food security. All of these things are connected and I'm not the expert on it, but this is what the experts who have looked into it understand.

I can commit to giving serious consideration to whether a public health emergency would be an additional step that we can take and coming back and providing, not just looking into it; I know that sounds like a vague type of response, but commit to giving it serious consideration in the short term and coming back with a response on that. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I apologize; it's sometimes a little too easy to get emotional about stuff like this.

Minister Main, you just outlined a great rationale for declaring suicide a public health emergency. When you look at all of the social determinants of health and all of the issues that we're facing, food insecurity, housing, education, all of those issues like childhood trauma, adult trauma, and family violence, declaring a public health emergency would also give us access to tools to addressing those issues because those are the issues that we need to address in order to have an impact on these numbers and in order to create healthier homes and healthier lives for people and to create that opportunity to want to live, to want to grow old.

I think I'll stop there today, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: That's just being a comment. Mr. Malliki.

Mr. Malliki: I would like to report progress. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and not subject to debate. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

Speaker: Item 20. Report of the Committee of the Whole. I ask that the Member for Arviat South, Mr.

Savikataaq, read the Report of the Committee of the Whole.

Item 20: Report of the Committee of the Whole

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the committee has been considering Tabled Documents 1 – 6(2), 120 – 6(2), 163 – 6(2), and 174 – 6(2) and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be agreed to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: There is a motion on the floor. Is there a seconder? Mr. Hickes. All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried.

Item 21. Third Reading of Bills. Item 22. *Orders of the Day*. Mr. Clerk.

Item 22: Orders of the Day

Clerk (Mr. Quirke): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *Orders of the Day* for November 8:

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

18. Second Reading of Bills

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

- Tabled Document 1 – 6(2)
- Tabled Document 120 – 6(2)
- Tabled Document 163 – 6(2)
- Tabled Document 174 – 6(2)

20. Report of the Committee of the Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

22. Orders of the Day

Thank you.

Speaker: In accordance to the authority provided to me by Motion 22 – 6(2), the House stands adjourned until Wednesday, November 8, at 10 a.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>House adjourned at 17:40

