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Iqaluit

Speaker: The Honourable Tony Akoak, MLA

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

Speaker

Hon. Tony Akoak

(Gjoa Haven)

Hon. David Akeagok

(Quttiktuq)

Minister of Economic Development and Transportation; Minister of Justice; Minister responsible for Labour

Joelie Kaerner

(Amittuq)

Hon. Karen Nutarak

(Tununiq)

Mary Killiktee

(Uqqummiut)

Hon. Daniel Qavvik

(Hudson Bay)

Minister of Environment; Minister of Energy; Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College

Hon. P.J. Akeagok

(Iqaluit-Niaqunnguut)

Premier; Minister of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs; Minister responsible for Immigration; Minister responsible for Indigenous Affairs

Hon. Lorne Kusugak

(Rankin Inlet South)

Minister of Finance, Chair of the Financial Management Board; Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation

Joanna Quassa

(Aggu)

Bobby Anavilok

(Kugluktuk)

Adam Lightstone

(Iqaluit-Manirajak)

Inagayuk Quqqiaq

(Netsilik)

Janet Brewster

(Iqaluit-Sinaa)

Hon. John Main

(Arviat North-Whale Cove)

Minister of Health; Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation; Minister responsible for Suicide Prevention

Alexander Sammurtok

(Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet)

Hon. Pamela Gross

(Cambridge Bay)

Deputy Premier; Minister of Culture and Heritage; Minister of Education; Minister of Languages; Minister responsible for Seniors

Solomon Malliki

(Aivilik)

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Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole

George Hicke

(Iqaluit-Tasiluk)

Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk

(Pangnirtung)

Minister of Family Services; Minister responsible for Homelessness; Minister of Human Resources; Minister responsible for the Status of Women; Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission

Craig Simailak

(Baker Lake)

Hon. David Joanasie

(South Baffin)

Government House Leader; Minister of Community and Government Services; Minister responsible for the Utility Rates Review Council

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Iqaluit, Nunavut
Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Members Present:

Hon. David Akeeagok, Hon. P.J. Akeeagok, Hon. Tony Akoak, Ms. Janet Brewster, Mr. George Hickes, Hon. David Joanasié, Ms. Mary Killiktee, Hon. Lorne Kusugak, Mr. Adam Lightstone, Hon. John Main, Hon. Margaret Nakashuk, Hon. Karen Nutarak, Hon. Daniel Qavvik, Ms. Joanna Quassa, Mr. Inagayuk Quqqiaq, Mr. Alexander Sammurtok, Mr. Joe Savikataaq, Mr. Craig Simailak.

>>*House commenced at 9:59*

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Tony Akoak) (interpretation): Good morning. Before we proceed, Mr. Simailak, can you say the opening prayer, please.

>>*Prayer*

Speaker: Good morning, everyone. People watching TV or listening to radio, welcome. We have some guests in the back, so I will ask all members to behave this morning.

>>*Laughter*

Thank you. Ministers' Statements. Hon. Government House Leader, Mr. Joanasié.

Item 2: Ministers' Statements**Minister's Statement 397 – 6(2):
Minister Absent from the House**

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Nunavummiut

and members and those visiting in the gallery.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise members that the Hon. Pamela Gross will be absent from the House today due to illness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

**Minister's Statement 398 – 6(2):
Recognition of All Chief
Negotiators for Devolution**

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say "good morning" to my fellow MLAs and Nunavummiut. I also welcome visitors in the gallery.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to recognize a few people who have played a lead role on the successful road to the signing of the *Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement*.

Most of us see the completed 239-page devolution document as a tool with a simple purpose: to return decision-making related to Nunavut public lands and waters back home to Nunavut, where it belongs. In three years we will make our own resource decisions and retain revenue from the extraction of those resources; *namminiqsurniq* (achieving greater autonomy).

What we don't see are the hours, days, weeks, months, and years of hammering out each word on each page. It takes tremendous work to navigate the legal complexities related to coordination between the Government of Nunavut,

Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the Government of Canada. It is not easy to plan out details such as transfer of employees and implementation plans for the official transfer that will take place in 2027. Thankfully, the Government of Nunavut had excellent chief negotiators to ensure each detail was handled masterfully.

Mr. Speaker, the process officially began with the Government of Nunavut's Chief Negotiator, Tony Penikett, who is a former Yukon Premier. By 2008, a negotiation protocol was signed with the Government of Canada and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated with a goal to reach an agreement in principle.

Our very own Minister of Justice, Minister David Akeeagok, took on the chief negotiator mantle in 2012, with negotiations formally beginning in 2014, at which point Simon Awa took the pivotal role.

In 2019, another milestone, the agreement in principle was signed.

The great responsibility passed to Pauloosie Suvega in 2020, who took us to the finish line.

Gentlemen, *qujannamiik*, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister responsible for the Status of Women, Ms. Nakashuk.

**Minister's Statement 399 – 6(2):
Gender-based Violence Initiatives**

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, my fellow MLAs and Nunavummiut.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, gender-based violence is one of our territory's most urgent issues. Cycles of systemic violence, unresolved intergenerational trauma, and lack of understanding of healthy relationships are disproportionately affecting Nunavummiut. At Qullit, we aim to create understanding and tools to educate, foster healing, and provide avenues to prevent and call out gender-based violence.

Mr. Speaker, on January 17, Qullit held a virtual roundtable with territorial partners and stakeholders, including the Government of Nunavut's departments of Justice and Family Services, the Embrace Life Council, the Agvik Society, as well as the RCMP.

The valuable insights provided and shared during these sessions will guide our future work and shape campaigns on gender-based violence. We also discussed existing resources and supports that are available and effective within our communities and where there are distinct gaps.

In the coming weeks, Qullit will begin community engagements in Cambridge Bay, Arviat, and Iqaluit to hear first-hand about what's needed as we begin to shape this work. I look forward to providing updates on those meetings and this project at a later date.

Mr. Speaker, all women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples in Nunavut

deserve to be safe, valued, respected, and live a life without harm.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk: Qullit will always strive for this. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister of Community and Government Services, Mr. Joanasie.

**Minister's Statement 400 – 6(2):
Undersea Fibre Project**

Hon. David Joanasie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge the pivotal role that Internet connectivity plays in fostering the growth of Nunavut. It is imperative for the efficient functioning of government operations, Inuit organizations, businesses, and Nunavummiut.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is to provide equitable services to all 25 Nunavut communities through a hybrid of technology, including fibre and low-Earth orbit satellite. To realize this goal in the shortest time frame, it is essential to prioritize efforts to access every available funding source.

Mr. Speaker, presently the Katittuq Nunavut Fibre project, aimed at linking Iqaluit, Nunavut to Milton, Newfoundland and Labrador, is encountering a budgetary shortfall attributed to factors such as inflation, high interest rates, and low exchange rates. In response to this financial gap, the Government of Nunavut applied for funding from the Canadian Radio-

television and Telecommunications Commission Broadband Fund in June 2023.

In addition to the Katittuq Nunavut project, my department is looking to realize the potential benefits of the Kativik Regional Government's fibre project, which includes the installation of a subsea fibre connection branching unit near Salluit, Quebec. Leveraging this opportunity to connect to an established fibre network, the Department of Community and Government Services has introduced the Kivalliq Baffin Connector project. This project aims to link Iqaluit, Kimmirut, Kinngait, and Coral Harbour to the Kativik fibre network. An application for funding for the Kivalliq Baffin Connector project was submitted under Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Broadband Fund.

Further, Mr. Speaker, my department has sought funding through the Innovation Science and Economic Development Universal Broadband Fund to facilitate the implementation of a fibre solution between Churchill, Manitoba, and Arviat, Rankin Inlet, and Coral Harbour.

Mr. Speaker, these endeavours are designed to establish a resilient telecommunication backbone and free up the satellite bandwidth necessary to enhance connectivity for underserved communities.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to returning with news of the status of our applications for broadband funding once they become accessible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister of Economic Development and Transportation, Mr. David Akeeagok.

**Minister's Statement 401 – 6(2):
Nunavut Mine Visit**

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to thank our Premier and some of my cabinet colleagues, some members of the Inuit landowners, some of the regular members, and our corporate partners for visiting some of our mine sites in Nunavut.

This fall, on September 26, we visited the Meliadine mine site to see firsthand the Agnico Eagle mine and talk to some of the workers and the operations and discussed with the senior managers from Agnico Eagle Mines.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, on February 7 we toured the Hope Bay mine site that is currently under care and maintenance and exploration. Following that, we signed a memorandum of understanding with Agnico Eagle and the Kitikmeot Inuit Association for the Hope Bay mining project.

On February 14 we flew to the Mary River Iron Ore Mine with my colleagues and various stakeholders and key investors. We met with Baffinland's executive and we were able to see the facilities first-hand. We also had constructive discussions about the operations and infrastructure on the site.

Mr. Speaker, mining is an important and integral part of Nunavut's economy. It provides employment to Nunavummiut,

increases cash flow into the territory, and provides socio-economic benefits. Maintaining partnerships with mining companies enables us to ensure sustainable resource management and wildlife protection, which are key to our territory's future.

Mr. Speaker, our territory benefits greatly from sustainable and responsible resource development. This partnership will enable us to increase and extend those benefits to Nunavummiut. Together we will explore opportunities for collaboration in areas like community wellness, education, infrastructure, training, and housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College, Mr. Qavvik.

**Minister's Statement 402 – 6(2):
Culinary Arts Program**

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to inform Members of this House of the positive impact the Nunavut Arctic College's Culinary Arts Program is having in Cambridge Bay. This renewed program began in 2023 and has been interacting with the community in different and positive ways.

The Culinary Arts Program provides students with the skills, knowledge, and theory to work in commercial kitchens. Students take classes such as Introduction to Baking, Soups and Sauces, and Breakfast. This learning

occurs in a beautiful Red Seal grade kitchen housed in the Kitikmeot Campus, which was completed in 2019. This campus was funded, designed, and completed through the Government of Nunavut's capital process.

While the students have been working hard to refine their skills in the kitchen, they are also working with others to showcase their skills. The culinary students, supported by instructors Chef Andy Poisson and Chef Tasha Tologanak, have invited students and instructors from the Kiilnik High School to learn in the kitchen and enjoy the delicious outcomes of their efforts. The culinary student continued the campus' "Meals on Wheels" event for three weeks. This year, culinary students made and delivered meals free of charge from Tuesday to Friday to elders. The Kitikmeot Campus has been giving back to the community in this way since 2020.

Finally, the culinary students completed their first banquet for the Kitikmeot Trade Show, which took place in Cambridge Bay in early February. I understand several of my colleagues were at this event and were able to enjoy the delicious efforts of the students and saw the level of professionalism and pride expressed by them. Thank you to everyone who shared encouraging words and compliments to the students. I know the students appreciated these words very much.

Mr. Speaker, Nunavut Arctic College works hard to provide diverse training opportunities for Nunavummiut to strengthen their knowledge and skills individually, and to give back to the communities and territory they call home. Please join me in recognizing the

efforts of the students and instructors of the Culinary Arts Program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, Mr. Main.

**Minister's Statement 403 – 6(2):
Independent Power Producer
Program Policy Approved**

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, my fellow MLAs.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister responsible for the Qulliq Energy Corporation, I am pleased to mark a significant milestone achieved on the path towards a renewable and reliable energy future. (interpretation ends) It is with great pride that I announce the cabinet approval and implementation of the Qulliq Energy Corporation's Independent Power Producer Program (IPP) policy, a transformative step that provides opportunities for Inuit organizations, Inuit-owned entities, and municipalities to develop local, renewable energy projects that best serve the long-term economic interests and energy self-reliance of Nunavummiut.

The territory's current reliance on diesel power generation infrastructure presents challenges in ensuring a stable and affordable energy supply, especially when we look at Nunavut's growing communities spread across a large geographic area.

The Qulliq Energy Corporation's Independent Power Producer Program

was designed to encourage private sector investment in the production and distribution of electricity in our territory, to help diversify our energy sources, and to leverage community resources effectively. I am confident that by forging partnerships with independent power producers, we will be able to better harness and explore Nunavut's renewable energy potential. The Qulliq Energy Corporation is establishing a foundation for a network of renewable energy projects across the territory with the implementation of the Independent Power Producer Policy.

In administering this program, the Qulliq Energy Corporation can reduce carbon emissions by integrating clean energy produced in communities across Nunavut. By partnering with independent producers, we are striving to safeguard the environment for future generations, while continuing to supply safe, reliable and affordable power. The Independent Power Producer Program also aims to prioritize local capacity building and economic development, ensuring that Nunavummiut play an active role in the creation, development, and operation of future renewable energy projects.

(interpretation) In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the staff and board at the Qulliq Energy Corporation, the Independent Power Producer Program partner organizations, and all stakeholders who have worked towards making this program a reality. We still have work ahead on the road towards seeing more renewable power in Nunavut, but this program's establishment has made the journey forward possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Item 3. Members' Statements. Member for Baker Lake, Mr. Simailak.

Item 3: Members' Statements

Member's Statement 520 – 6(2): Recognizing Kaytlyn Niego of Baker Lake

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, all.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I would like to recognize one of my constituents from Baker Lake. Her name is Kaytlyn Niego, who is a young Inuk woman who now has been in the aviation industry for a number of years now. She started out as a flight attendant servicing the people flying on Canadian North. She is now working for Calm Air recently. She was recently on Calm Air's Women in Aviation Week, one of the star features for the company.

I am hoping that all the little boys and girls out there that are watching or listening look at Kaytlyn. She is a good person to look up to. She has travelled all over Nunavut. She has experienced all the beautiful communities in Nunavut, but she always comes back home to the most beautiful community in Nunavut, Baker Lake, and her home community.

Thank you, Kaytlyn. I'm sure, like I said, that all the little kids are looking up to you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Members' Statements. Member for Iqaluit-Tasiluk, Mr. Hickee.

**Member's Statement 521 – 6(2):
Parliamentary Intern Program**

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that at the appropriate time, the Premier will be recognizing some of visitors in the gallery that we have here today.

There are 12 members of the Parliamentary Intern Program up from Ottawa visiting us here in Iqaluit. I have often participated in the visits of previous groups that have come up and I had the privilege of giving this group a tour of the legislature here yesterday. I just want to thank them for their wonder and interest in coming to the north and the work that they're doing in Ottawa with the various Members of Parliament that they're working with.

I would like to think that we have 12 new friendly voices in Ottawa that will help their ministers and Members of Parliament come to their decision-making with a little touch of Nunavut to recognize the challenges that we have here that some of them have been able to see first-hand.

I would like to single one individual out who is a long-time friend of my wife's family, Jared Borgerson, who is here visiting, who is actually from BC. He has been a very good friend of my nephew Jessie for many years, and his parents have been friends of my wife's family for many years.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to acknowledge the great work that I'm looking to these individuals contributing in their roles in Ottawa. Thank you.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Members' Statements.
Member for Quttiktuq, Mr. David Akeeagok.

**Member's Statement 522 – 6(2): Atii
Angutiit in Arctic Bay**

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I send my regards to the people of Quttiktuq.

The Atii Angutiit program started in Arctic Bay last year and it ran very well. Yesterday they completed building four qamutiks and they will be building more sleds. For men, it's part of their healing process and to develop pride in oneself. I very much encourage the people and the men who go and attend the program. The two constituency communities that I represent still don't have that program.

The program manager, Richard Bohlender, is doing great work up there. He is the coordinator of the program. He is a good person to talk to if you want to start something like that. They will have coffee and get together this evening. Bobby Kilabuk and Andrew Taqtu are great instructors of the program. I encourage them to continue that. I would like them to spread the program to all the communities because men need healing too and develop more pride and help each other. This program does that.

I thank the Nunavut government for financing this and providing space for the program. It's a very attractive program and I am proud of it. I would like this to continue and I congratulate the participants. I would like them to spread it around and that's why I brought it up here in the House. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Members' Statements. Item 4. Returns to Oral Questions. Hon. Minister of Family Services, Ms. Nakashuk.

Item 4: Returns to Oral Questions

Return to Oral Question 703 – 6(2): Adult Learning and Training Supports Program Application Deadlines

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I am returning to an oral question asked by Ms. Nutarak, MLA for Tununiq, Question No. 703 – 6(2), asked on February 23, 2024, in regard to the Adult Learning and Training Supports Program application deadlines.

Mr. Speaker, the new Adult Learning and Training Supports Program deadline was effective April 1, 2023. Since then, Family Services financially assisted 244 clients, which represents a decrease from 284 clients served during the previous fiscal year. The deadline was changed based on feedback from career development regional offices. Family Services is currently reviewing this decision and considering eliminating deadlines to allow funds to be available all year round. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Item 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Hon. Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Item 5: Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize some special visitors in the gallery and welcome them to our House. Today we have members of the 2023-24 Parliamentary Internship Program. I would like to recognize:

- Jared Borgerson
- Katie Campbell
- Paulina Chan
- Camille Cournoyer
- Catherine Despatie
- Sahib Kaur Dhaliwal
- Jean Samuel Houle
- Cynthia Huo
- Michael Nolan
- Arianne Joyce Padillo
- Rodney Stehr
- Ahdithya Visweswaran

I would like to welcome them all. There are 12 of them. I am sure they have visited places all over the world: Quebec City, Brussels, the United Kingdom, the Americas, and Nunavut. They are here to visit and I am very glad that they have come here to understand more about Nunavut. I welcome them to our House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Welcome to the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Item 6. Oral Questions. Member for Aggu, Ms. Quassa.

Item 6: Oral Questions

Question 793 – 6(2): Solid Waste Management

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. Good day

to the people of Nunavut and my colleagues here.

(interpretation ends) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Environment.

Mr. Speaker, a number of constituency concerns have been raised with me regarding the need for enhanced recycling and waste management practices in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment has previously indicated that it has been working to develop a waste management strategy for the territory. Can the minister provide an update today on the status of this work? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Environment, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, the solid waste management strategy will help to support solid waste management best practices. My department is working with stakeholders to develop a solid waste management strategy across the territory. The Department of Environment has contracted a consultant to aide in the creation of a solid waste management plan. The consultant is currently working on a project to identify potential projects the Government of Nunavut can undertake with cost estimates and the advancement of modernizing waste management in Nunavut. The final list is expected to be shared with the members of the public as soon as it is available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister. It will be interesting to see which communities will be selected.

(interpretation ends) It is my understanding that the department has been involved in a pilot project to remove old waste oil barrels from a number of Nunavut communities. Can the minister provide an update today on the status of this work and can he indicate when a similar project will be undertaken in Igloolik? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Environment, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. A couple of years ago or last year, if I recall, the oil waste backhaul pilot project was undertaken in three communities in our territory, the communities being Arviat, Cambridge Bay, and Pond Inlet. The pilot project targeted one per region as a pilot project. We will learn from the waste backhaul pilot project. It will help us to identify the work that must be undertaken to do other possible projects across the territory and in communities.

The three communities that I identified, a drum inventory and assessment were completed in Arviat, Cambridge Bay, and Pond Inlet. Waste materials in Arviat and Cambridge Bay have been shipped down south for disposal. For Pond Inlet, there a delay in getting packaging materials to Pond Inlet, which

caused half of the shipment to remain in the community.

I look forward to providing more information from the pilot project study and get back to the Legislative Assembly if the department identifies further projects. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the minister. You would hope that this will increase and speed up as we see more waste every year.

(interpretation ends) I recognize that developing recycling programs is very challenging in our remote communities. Can the minister indicate today what work has been undertaken to provide support for local community organizations that want to begin recycling programs? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Environment, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. The recycling of solid waste in our territory is a challenge for every community based on the extensive funding that would be required for the program to be undertaken in Nunavut.

At this time, the Department of Environment works with other departments to identify possible plans to do recycling plants for the territory, working alongside with Community and Government Services to assist the department as to how we can proceed

with the plan. There are some ideas that have been identified for the department.

At this time, it's hard for our department to find funding to do solid waste recycling in the territory and I'm certain that later in the coming years, it will be something that our government will do in terms of getting our environment into a better stance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet, Mr. Sammurtok.

Question 794 – 6(2): Liquor Regulation

Mr. Sammurtok (interpretation): Good morning to the people of Chesterfield Inlet, Rankin Inlet, and Nunavut.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) My questions are to the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Liquor and Cannabis Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I want to revisit a number of issues that I raised during our last fall sitting.

As the minister will recall, I expressed my appreciation for the actions taken to respond to concerns presented by the mayor and hamlet council of Rankin Inlet regarding the impact that the beer and wine store has had on the community.

Mr. Speaker, it has been almost six months since the daily purchase limits at the store were reduced. Can the minister indicate what effect this decision has had on addressing concerns related to alcohol-related crime and other problems

in the community? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Liquor and Cannabis Commission, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This was a new initiative last fall to reduce the alcohol purchase limits by 50 percent. It's too early to say at this time what impact it will have. It will be better to do a review after it has been in place for a year to see if it made improvements or not. These are the things that you will have to weigh in, but at the moment, we can't really say what impacts it has had. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Sammurtok.

Mr. Sammurtok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I last raised this issue during the fall sitting, I asked the minister when he would take action to reduce the number of hours per week that the beer and wine store is open. At that time, the minister indicated that he would be reviewing the subject. Can the minister confirm today if and when the beer and wine store's opening hours will be reduced? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Liquor and Cannabis Commission, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even if we reduce the beer and wine store's opening hours, we can't say what benefits we would see and whether we will reduce the store's hours. The amount that consumers can purchase was reduced by

half. After we figure out what impact it had, whether or not it was beneficial, we will look at what impacts will come from reducing the store's hours of operation. Even if we try to work on these all at once, we won't really get the grasp of the benefits or negative impacts. We will not make a decision on the reduction of the store's hours until we determine the impacts of the reduction in alcohol purchase limits. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Sammurtok.

Mr. Sammurtok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister will recall, amendments to the Beer and Wine Store Regulations were published in the September 2023 edition of the *Nunavut Gazette*.

I was very surprised to see a reference in the Beer and Wine Store Regulations to the Municipality of Cambridge Bay. Can the minister confirm if and when a new beer and wine store will be opened in that community? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Liquor and Cannabis Commission, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're continuing to learn what improvements can be made in opening a beer and wine store. In Cambridge Bay, 80 percent of the community voted in favour of opening a beer and wine store, but we can't just open a beer and wine store. The inventory, what needs to be purchased, and a space are required. I do not expect a beer and wine store to be

open there this year, but it is still in the works. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa, Ms. Brewster.

Question 795 – 6(2): Federal-Territorial Relations

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Premier and they concern his recent announcement in the House about the current state of bilateral relations with the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's statement covered a lot of ground, so I ask your indulgence as I endeavour to do the same thing today.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier will appreciate, I closely follow the proceedings of the Parliament of Canada.

I was very happy to note that our hard-working Member of Parliament took the time last month to make reference to an exchange that the Premier and I recently had in this House concerning the Government of Nunavut's immigration policy.

In her questions to the federal government, our Member of Parliament referenced the comment that the Premier made to me when he stated that a lack of housing is the single biggest obstacle facing us in welcoming immigrants and refugees to Nunavut.

Can the Premier tell me today if he raised this specific issue with the Prime Minister in any of their recent meetings here in Iqaluit, and can he clearly

describe what the Prime Minister's response to him was? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my colleague for that question. We're always very fortunate to have our ongoing collaborations with the Prime Minister, specifically when we have many very pressing issues and partnerships that we have been building.

During that specific bilateral discussion, we did not address the immigration. Mr. Speaker, we really focused on the historic signing of the devolution agreement and the continued partnership we're going to have to continue to build upon. Further to that, we also discussed housing being the cornerstone of our mandate among many things, but immigration was not one of the topics I specifically discussed with the Prime Minister at my most recent bilateral discussion with him when he came here into Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, that's a completely understandable response.

Mr. Speaker, another important issue that falls under the area of federal-territorial relations concerns the filling of critical appointments.

Mr. Speaker, we're not Ontario or Quebec, provinces that have dozens of

representatives, judges, and other office-holders.

Mr. Speaker, currently, Nunavut does not have a deputy commissioner, Nunavut does not have a sitting Senator, and Nunavut will very shortly be without a chief justice. Mr. Speaker, the federal government cannot be allowed to permit these critical roles to remain vacant for extended periods of time.

Can the Premier assure me today that he raised this specific issue with the Prime Minister in any of their recent meetings here in Iqaluit, and can he clearly describe what the Prime Minister's response to him was? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I thank my colleague for that question. Yes, I did mention the urgency that is in particular to the deputy commissioner. That has been a concern that I have raised many times. We're in constant communication with the Prime Minister's Office. To my understanding, it is going through the process to make that appointment.

I am as well aware and really encourage the expediency in terms of the appointment of the next Senator. It's so important when you only have one seat at the second sober thought at the Senate, who plays a real crucial role in terms of amending legislation that reflect the priorities and realities we face here in our territory. It is something I did mention that we require that urgently to be filled. I am very thankful that Minister LeBlanc had indicated that

there is a committee now accepting applications, and I really encourage every Nunavummiuq who is interested to apply to be able to serve Nunavummiut in that very important role.

As well, just with the recent minister's statement of my colleague of our Chief Justice Mr. Sharkey's retirement that is forthcoming, I could assure the member we are working very closely with my colleague to ensure that the next appointment is done as quickly as we can to ensure the stability and certainty, I think, that we all seek for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Premier. I look forward to hearing those announcements very soon.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the next federal budget will be introduced next month. What assurances did the Prime Minister provide to the Premier that there will be no cuts to federal programs that are targeted towards Inuit and other indigenous Canadians? Thank you, Mr. Premier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> *Laughter*

Speaker: Premier of Nunavut, Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok.

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, was very excited to hear the Hon. Freeland just announced that next month, later in April, they will be announcing the federal budget. We will be paying very close attention to that federal budget, as we are advocating and

continue to advocate from every ministry here the important work that we need to do.

I believe we have made some huge headway through partnership. We just had Minister Holland here with the work that Minister Main was doing with the Department of Health and signed two different bilateral agreements with the recent signing of the devolution agreement. We really advanced some very important issues and we will continue to advocate for more investment in particular to infrastructure. We realize there's such an infrastructure gap and that during our engagement from every minister here through our bilateral discussions, we talked about the importance of nation building but also the infrastructure gap that persists in the north, in particular here in Nunavut.

We will continue to lobby the federal government with our very good partners and continue to put solutions on the table and hope to see some major announcements at that federal budget that impact the lives of Nunavummiut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Tasiluk, Mr. Hickes.

Question 796 – 6(2): Certification of Educational Institutions

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last fall I had raised some questions with the Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College that I would like to follow up on regarding the federal Registered Education Savings Plan.

Mr. Speaker, a few months ago I received some correspondence from the

minister and I'm looking for some updates on some of the commitments that were made in that correspondence.

My first question is: what specific criteria must be met to obtain certification as an educational institution under the *Income Tax Act* to allow for students to access Registered Education Savings Plan funds? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member from Tasiluk for bringing my attention last session to the fact that the payment of fees to Nunavut Arctic College cannot be made with the Registered Education Savings Plan. Mr. Speaker, these accounts are set up by adults to save funds for post-secondary training once children go to trades school, college, or university.

Mr. Speaker, the best path forward has been determined and parties are working to ensure that piece for the next school year can be paid with a Registered Education Savings Plan. The college is going through the process of becoming designated by the Canada Student Loans Program. Once this happens, Nunavut Arctic College will be added to the master designation list and the master certification list. This will allow students to use Registered Education Savings Plan payments for school-related costs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that information, but what I'm looking for is what specific criteria are needed to obtain that certification. Where I'm going with this is Nunavut Arctic College has been in existence for many years and I just found out, like the minister, just last fall that it was not eligible for access to the Registered Education Savings program. I would like to get a more detailed answer on what criteria does Nunavut Arctic College need to meet to be able to obtain the certification. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the details are not in front of me, I'll take the question as notice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Question taken as notice. Oral Questions. Member for Baker Lake, Mr. Simailak.

Question 797 – 6(2): Medical Travel

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

We hear about the medical patients who have to go to Winnipeg. Usually when a patient goes down, they carry a piece of paper identifying who they are and who they are to meet. I would like to ask the minister: what is happening with that? Some people from Baker Lake have to wait a long time at the airport terminal for pickup. What improvements have been made? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my colleague for that question on this subject. The new boarding home in Winnipeg is called Uquutaq. Since the Uquutaq Centre Medical Boarding Home opened in 2023, I know that the contractors or administrators of the building are working on improving the system. The Department of Health is implementing by way of its management system. They are using Nomadis. Our staff is currently implementing the usage of that and the same thing with the airlines. Nomadis is utilized and the operators of the Uquutaq Centre will be utilizing the Nomadis system after they have received training on how to use it, and hopefully that will make some improvements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. When is the training going to take place? There are some patients who are concerned about where they are going to be sleeping for the night because they're not getting picked up. When is the training going to take place? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I share my colleague's concern about the patients waiting a long time at the air terminal. We would like to make sure that everything goes smoothly from the time a patient leaves from home, goes to their destination for

their appointment and return back home. With the operators of the Uquutaq Centre, training will be provided in the near future, but I can't pinpoint when that training will take place at this point. Mr. Speaker, the focus will be on privacy training.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, the focus of the training is to have the staff undertake and complete the necessary privacy training, which is a matter that the Department of Health takes seriously. We want to protect client privacy in everything we do, including medical travel. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. For my last question, with the patients going to Winnipeg, the Uquutaq Centre has some dental and other services nearby. Sometimes the patients from Baker Lake miss their appointments, for example, with optometrists and I think that it would be best if they go make their appointments directly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again thank my colleague. This is something to be considered. We had a meeting last year with Kivalliq representatives regarding the Uquutaq Centre Medical Boarding Home. We can look at other solutions in the coming months and years. It would make perfect sense for them to go to their appointments, either go see the dentist or be set up for other

appointments like the dentist, the hearing specialist to get hearing aids, and so on.

They would need access to the Non-Insured Health Benefits program. (interpretation ends) The Non-Insured Health Benefits program would be a key part of enabling that opportunistic appointment-seeking or opportunities for individuals to seek out services. It makes a lot of sense, but we would need to make sure, along with the boarding home operator, that it doesn't interfere with the primary reason for the medical traveller being in Winnipeg. If it can be worked out with the service providers in terms of billing to the Non-Insured Health Benefits program, this is something that could possibly become more of a regular occurrence during visits to Winnipeg.

I thank the member for following up on a discussion that was had some time ago with the operators at the boarding home. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Question 798 – 6(2): Condominium Issues

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this morning are for the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation. I would like to revisit a number of issues that I have previously raised regarding condominiums.

Mr. Speaker, condos play an integral role in the housing continuum. As I can attest, condos provide an important first step to homeownership. However, there have been significant challenges faced

by condo corporations and by condo owners.

Mr. Speaker, in 2001 I tabled correspondence from the Iqaluit Condo Corporation Collective which highlighted serious concerns regarding the ability to obtain affordable insurance. When I drew this attention to the government, the minister of the day indicated that the Nunavut Housing Corporation would be working with the Department of Finance as well as the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC) to address this issue. I would like to ask if the minister would be able to provide an update on progress in this area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have had some progress. I've had the opportunity to discuss this item with the Minister of Finance on a couple of occasions. Mr. Speaker, the housing corporation has stepped up and made a contribution towards the insurance on the condo program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moving on to my next line of questioning, as the minister will recall, I have also asked a number of questions concerning the Nunavut Housing Corporation's Staff Condominium Program. It's no secret that this program has faced a number of serious challenges. Some recent news reports as recent as January 2024 have confirmed

that a major investigation has taken place into the administration of this staff condo program. I would like to ask: can the minister indicate today what the next steps are to get the staff condo program back on track? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the questions from my colleague. Mr. Speaker, we have been taking a look at this. Although the news report came out in January, we have been dealing with this from day one, actually from the day I became Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. We have caught light of these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I could say with great certainty that all the issues that were brought forward regarding the investigation that took place have been dealt with and are at different stages of being completed.

In terms of moving forward, we are on the moving forward path inasmuch as to see if the path of the condo program is one that is appropriate and where we could make tweaks and/or changes if necessary, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the minister referencing the investigation into the staff condo program.

Mr. Speaker, the article dated January 2024 had indicated in the headline,

“Investigation finds ‘cavalier’ attitude towards millions in housing corporation funds,” and specifically that “‘reckless and willful disregard’ for the management of 36 condominium units at 4096 and 4096B” in the “Road to Nowhere Project.” Further, it had indicated that to date, none of the 36 condo units have been sold.

I would like to ask the minister... This staff condo program, I believe, was initiated in 2017 at the end of the Fourth Assembly and the staff condo program has spread and it’s now into the life of its third government. I would like to ask: over the years or since this article has been released, have any of those 36 staff condo units been sold at the Road to Nowhere project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the units that my colleague is referring to on the Road to Nowhere, the sales have not been complete; they may be at different stages in some of those units, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Uqqummiut, Ms. Killiktee.

Question 799 – 6(2): Baffinland Caribou Management

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my constituents and Nunavummiut.

I would like to direct my questions today to the Minister of Environment. As I have stated that my eye was twitching, I

want you to listen very carefully and remember and keep repeating my question in your head.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Environment, as I said, and they concern the important issue of caribou management in this region of Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, there are many hunters in Qikiqtarjuaq and Clyde River and I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the hunters and trappers organizations in both communities.

As the minister will recall, his department issued a public service announcement on February 12 of this year concerning the closure of the 2023-24 Baffin Island caribou harvest. The public service announcement indicated that the total allowable harvest of 400 caribou had been reached.

(interpretation ends) *Uqaqtittijii*, can the minister confirm how many caribou were harvested in areas that fall under the jurisdiction of the Qikiqtarjuaq and Clyde River HTOs? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Environment, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question from the member from Uqqummiut. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment works closely with the hunters and trappers organizations, and the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board assigns the allocation of tags distributed on Baffin Island. For the current year, ‘23-24, the member is correct that the total allowable harvest for Baffin Island is

400. Based on the information provided to me, the total harvested caribou within Baffin reached to 421. The reports came in through the hunters and trappers organization submitted to the Department of Environment, along with stakeholders in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for indicating that 421 caribou were harvested. I know that it's in our area. I rise today because of the challenges that are faced with caribou harvesting.

(interpretation ends) As the minister will recall, he made a statement in the Legislative Assembly at its sitting of February 28, 2024, in which he indicated that there are "positive and encouraging signs of possible recovery in some South Baffin areas." Can the minister elaborate today on what information his department has obtained that enabled him to make this very welcome statement? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Environment, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, my department is currently working with co-management partners to plan a southern Baffin Island caribou abundance survey for March 2024. They're starting fairly soon. The department is planning to do another survey within Baffin Island for the central part of Baffin Island and also the

north part of Baffin Island in the coming years.

Mr. Speaker, the composition surveys were completed in South Baffin in March and April 2023. The data is currently being entered and analyzed and a final report will be distributed to all co-management partners in early 2024. I can share that the Department of Environment deployed a total of 29 satellite telemetry collars on adult female caribou across south and central Baffin Island in April 2023.

The hunters and trappers organization appointed participants to lead the field program to provide transparency and continue the collaborative working relationship between hunters and trappers organizations and the Department of Environment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This issue is about harvesting and the management of caribou. I rise today as a woman, although I know that it may not look good to some men, but as a woman rising today to talk about caribou harvesting, I have committed myself to speak on behalf of them. I also take part in the harvesting issues. This could be interesting and popular to the harvesters because harvesters need good news as well as the community does because it brings their spirits up.

Moving on to the next question that you have responded to in part, (interpretation ends) in his statement, the minister also indicated that "An abundance survey of

South Baffin Island is planned for March 2024, and we are planning similar surveys for North and Central Baffin in the coming years.” Can the minister clarify why the abundance surveys for the north and central regions cannot be undertaken under the current 2024 calendar year? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Environment, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, the abundance survey’s purpose is to provide an estimate of the number of caribou in a population or an area. Types of the data produced are the number of individuals or population estimates. It can be difficult to identify individual sex, so it is usually combined with composition. When the department conducts an abundance survey, they’re counting any caribou they observed during the surveys.

In terms of the member’s question about why the Department of Environment selected South Baffin as a start, it is based on the cost of the funding to conduct the survey. Right now, after the pre-COVID situation, the high cost of obtaining aircraft personnel has been a factor for the expense. I can tell the House that it’s nearly \$1 million to conduct a survey for an area for South Baffin. Later in the coming years once we obtain funding for the central and northern parts of Baffin Island, we will proceed with the abundance surveys within those areas. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Arviat South, Mr. Savikataaq.

Question 800 – 6(2): Property Taxes from Mining Companies

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

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on an issue that I recently raised with the Minister of Justice concerning the amendments to the *Property Assessment and Taxation Act*, which was unanimously passed by the Legislative Assembly in the year of 2021. As the minister will recall, he voted in favour of these amendments, as did every other Member of the House, including many of us sitting here today.

Mr. Speaker, the minister recently increased the property tax rate for mining properties by a full 10 percent. Can the minister tell us today how many mines in the territory are currently generating property tax revenue for the Government of Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be fair to say that all are, although some are outstanding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think there are four mines in Nunavut. I could be mistaken, but it's nice to know that they all have to pay.

Mr. Speaker, each year the Department of Finance publishes a list of property tax arrears. As I recall, the mining companies operating in the Kivalliq region are paying their fair share of territorial property tax.

For the record, can the minister confirm if the Baffinland Mining Corporation is in arrears for property tax for the Mary River mine and, if it is, can the minister confirm if the amount is in the hundreds of dollars, thousands of dollars, or millions of dollars? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the millions, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is sad to hear that the Government of Nunavut is owed millions of dollars in taxes from a mining company.

Mr. Speaker, after I asked my questions to the Minister of Justice, I had the opportunity to read the Government of Nunavut's statement of defence in respect to the lawsuit that Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated has launched against the Government of Nunavut in relation to the *Property Assessment and Taxation Act*. This

matter is scheduled to be heard in the fall of this year.

Mr. Speaker, on September 14, 2021 the Qikiqtani Inuit Association had a media release that urged the MLAs to vote against Bill 55. In the media release, it says, "The bill in its current form imposes on Nunavut Inuit an incorrect interpretation of the *Nunavut Agreement*. The Government of Nunavut has failed to listen to the concerns that the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and other Inuit representative organizations shared with the Government of Nunavut over several years." It also states, "I urge MLAs to consider their votes carefully."

Before the bill was passed, there was pressure for the MLAs to vote against the bill, but the bill was passed unanimously. Normally, when someone has a position, it doesn't stop there. For the record, can the minister indicate if he or any other cabinet ministers had been lobbied by the president of NTI or QIA to drop our defence against the lawsuit? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can only speak on my behalf, and on my behalf, I have not been lobbied, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Netsilik, Mr. Quqqiaq.

**Question 801 – 6(2): Mould
Assessment and Remediation
Initiatives**

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member of the Legislative Assembly representing the constituency of Netsilik, I am very concerned about the ongoing issue of mould infestation in public housing units.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen with my own eyes the poor condition of mould-infested units and have heard with my own ears the concerns of constituents, including elders, who are living in these conditions.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister will recall, the Nunavut Housing Corporation received approximately \$20 million in funding between the 2021-22 and 2023-24 fiscal years for mould assessment and remediation projects.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm how many units in Taloyoak and Kugaaruk have received mould assessments and remediation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is ongoing work to remediate mould in public housing units and even units that are not for public housing. The housing corporation provides funding to the local

housing organizations for mould assessment and remediation. Today all the communities, I believe, have received this work, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the minister for your response. Mr. Speaker, as the minister will also recall, I was very proud to have voted in favour of the Nunavut Housing Corporation's 2024-25 capital estimates, which include \$7.0 million in funding for mould assessment and remediation activities. Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate today which communities are scheduled to benefit from this work during the upcoming 2024-25 fiscal year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the work that is scheduled for the coming year, it is yet to be determined which communities will be next and which units in the communities will be dealt with. As soon as that has been put together, I will inform my colleague. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be following up on this topic until my constituents get the mould removed from the units that they are living in.

Mr. Speaker, Kugaaruk and Taloyoak are very much looking forward to the construction of new housing units under the Nunavut 3000 strategy.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister describe some of the new design features for the new units that will enable them to better resist mould infestation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The housing units that will be constructed will have proper air handling systems and they have adjustable machinery that handles the air handling. When the tenant shuts off the air handling unit, they end up having poor circulation. Once it has been shut off, moisture that causes mould is no longer expelled outside and the air stagnates. It would be good if the tenants do not shut off the air handling units. To answer the question, all new builds are going to have proper ventilation and the air handling units have a more modern way of venting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Tasiluk, Mr. Hickes.

**Question 802 – 6(2): Housing
Threshold Amounts for
Homeownership**

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I figured I might as well jump on the bandwagon and ask the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation some questions as well today.

Mr. Speaker, my first question is: when is the next review scheduled for the household income threshold limit for Nunavut Housing Corporation homeownership programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad that he has jumped on the bandwagon to ask some questions.

Mr. Speaker, we are going through those different programs right now, actually, and trying to see what the thresholds are and how we can make them more user-friendly and more inclusive, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Using Iqaluit as an example, the household income limit is \$177,500 per year. It sounds like a lot of money, but when you look at the housing market here in Iqaluit, somebody making that much money or less would be very challenged to support a mortgage or probably even be approved for a mortgage.

Mr. Speaker, Minister Fraser from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation was recently here in Iqaluit. Did the minister raise the issue of this amount, excluding residents who still need assistance in maintaining homeownership? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's so nice to see that I have members in this House who are concerned about those very things. It just makes my argument that much stronger.

Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to meet with Mr. Fraser and we discussed that very topic, amongst many other umbrella issues surrounding homeownership and the lack of ability to get into them.

Mr. Speaker, Nunavummiut pay really high rates for everything, including food, the cost of living, and maintaining a modest home, and it makes it very hard for people to even save money for a down payment. Mr. Speaker, you need to be making double income, if not more, to be able to afford this.

I've had that discussion and I have a scheduled meeting with my federal counterpart in the next month too, and we will be discussing this and other programs and possibilities of getting more federal support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear this is at the top of the minister's radar.

I would just like to give an example of just one housing program and the potential risk and liability when we talk about the Oil Tank Replacement Program. Mr. Speaker, I know that a few

years ago, the amount was raised to allow homeowners to be able to get oil tank replacements. When we look at the potential environmental liability, the potential economic liability of a homeowner, if something were to happen and their oil tank was long past its replacement date, it could jeopardize their entire home insurance.

Mr. Speaker, I can't emphasize enough on how important it is to make a realistic income threshold for homeownership programs. I just want to say here publicly in the House that I fully support the minister's initiatives. I really hope that the federal government, through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, will meet the expectations that we're putting on our residents to maintain homes, to make sure that the environmental liabilities are mitigated as much as possible. I would just like to thank the minister for his continued work in this effort. I am really looking forward to announcements coming very, very soon, Mr. Speaker.

I know I have spoken to constituents that are just above that income threshold that don't qualify for homeownership programs and they're still struggling to maintain when we look at the cost of homeownership in this territory. I really encourage the minister to keep this at the top of his radar and I look forward to a pending announcement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague said it pretty much bang on. We have a lot of

Nunavummiut who would like to gain independence and not have to depend on public housing, staff housing, and other programs. They would like to become independent, own their own home, and work towards a brighter future, not just for themselves but for their children and grandchildren. That all starts with a foundation at home and being able to own your own home, not just own it but also to maintain it.

Mr. Speaker, we have been working very hard with some of the regular members in this House to take a look at the policies and procedures that the housing corporation does have. Very early on in my appointment to this portfolio, I committed to ensuring that we make changes within the housing corporation to make it more user-friendly.

Oftentimes my colleague said that you have the petroleum tank issues and you need to have that fixed in order to get your mortgage and all the bills always come at once. We have to do our best to ensure that where the programs are, they are helping those that need it and we will continue to work towards that, Mr. Speaker. We have maintenance issues on and on in homeownership and I do believe that we need to do more and help them, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Sinaa, Ms. Brewster.

Question 803 – 6(2): Taxation and Regulation of Addictive Substances

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start by apologizing to both you and the Premier for my earlier mistake. I apologize for that.

My questions today are for the Minister of Finance, I guess he's getting his steps in today, and they concern the issue of taxation and regulation of addictive substances.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health made reference the other day to not "getting into the weeds" when describing his department's efforts to combat youth consumption of tobacco, cannabis, and other addictive substances. My questions today are going to focus on the role that the Department of Finance plays in this sphere.

Mr. Speaker, there is no shortage of evidence to support the conclusion that tax rates have a critical impact in reducing youth smoking.

As the minister is aware, tobacco taxes have not been raised in Nunavut since 2017, over half a decade ago.

My first question to the minister is simple: why did his recent Budget Address not announce any increases in the territorial tobacco taxes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our department in policy and other sectors of finance has been working very hard and very short-staffed at this time, Mr. Speaker. This is one that we could look at, but honestly, we haven't had the opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I encourage the minister and his team to shift their focus in that area. I think it would be very important and impactful.

Mr. Speaker, information published by the Department of Finance indicates that the Government of Nunavut is projected to raise only \$300,000 in cannabis tax revenues during the upcoming 2024-25 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, I fully appreciate, recognize, and understand the need for tax policy in this area to strike a balance between deterring consumption of harmful products, raising revenue for public services, while not encouraging the creation of black markets. However, \$300,000 is barely a rounding error and is certainly not what was envisioned when cannabis was originally legalized in order to ensure that revenues go into public coffers, not the pockets of organized crime.

Mr. Speaker, information published by the minister's department indicates that it has been participating in the federal government's current review of cannabis legislation. Can the minister indicate what specific recommendations have been made by his department for changes to federal law in respect to the sale and taxation of cannabis? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Mr. Speaker, as of now, we will continue to work with our federal counterparts on that issue and monitor where it is going. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister will recall, I have spoken before about the need to ensure that our government captures revenue from the sale of vaping products in Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, the extent to which vaping should be considered a harm reduction measure is a question for another time.

However, I was happy to note that the documentation supporting this year's Budget Address indicated that the Canada Revenue Agency will begin collecting Nunavut tax on vaping products sold in the territory as of July 1, 2024.

Can the minister provide an estimate today of how much new revenue is expected to be generated on an annual basis from this tax? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're anticipating revenues of \$24 million in tobacco taxes for this year. Mr. Speaker, I don't have the level of detail to say how many percent of that we anticipate to be coming from vaping specifically. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if and when I would have that available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Question 804 – 6(2): Condominium Issues

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to follow up on my questions regarding the article in *Nunatsiaq News* about the investigation into the Nunavut Housing Corporation's staff condo program.

Mr. Speaker, when the staff condo program was released in 2017, the first initial round, I believe, had sold 16 units. Mr. Speaker, in 2019 the Government of Nunavut and the Nunavut Housing Corporation initiated the second round of sales of the staff condo program.

Mr. Speaker, since 2019, I have repeatedly stood in this House and expressed the frustration that I have heard from the applicants who have applied to this program with the length of time it has taken to process such sales. Mr. Speaker, the article indicates that "Housing corporation staff 'repeatedly' advised these buyers that purchase and sale agreements were forthcoming, 'despite there being multiple situations where this was demonstrably false and known to be impossible.'"

I would like to ask: how many times did the Nunavut Housing Corporation repeatedly advise potential buyers that purchase and sale agreements were forthcoming, and can he identify what barriers prevented the sales and why the Nunavut Housing Corporation was not forthcoming to the applicants? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: More than one question there. Hon. Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is something that happened, as my colleague said, in the previous or the two governments ago. Mr. Speaker, when this government appointed me Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, we began immediately to deal with some of the issues that my colleague... I can't get into those details, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the minister's response that this is an ongoing matter that pre-dates the life of this government, but for the benefit of the members of the public service that have been continuously frustrated for years, I believe someone should stand and be held accountable to them for this situation. I'll move on, recognizing that that's a different matter.

Since the program was initiated in 2017, I believe only 16 units have been sold. I would like to ask the minister for an update on the status of the sold units as well as units occupied by potential buyers and the number of vacant units. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Road to Nowhere units, if I can use that term loosely, none of the units have been signed off as being sold. There are, I believe, some units that are still going through the process of that.

In terms of the units in the Plateau section, I believe there are six or eight units still available there, and the other units, that would make it about 20 to 24 units, have been sold or finalizing their being sold. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your second and final supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the total number of units between the Plateau and Road to Nowhere staff condominium units is 60 units. Mr. Speaker, Iqaluit has been in a housing crisis for a number of years with zero percent vacancy on the rental market and very limited staff housing and public housing availability. Mr. Speaker, these units are direly needed by Iqalummiut.

I would like to ask the minister for an update on the next steps. When does the minister expect to have a third intake of potential buyers or any other potential clients? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague spoke about all the issues that were done in the front of this matter. I think, because of those errors, it has taken the corporation a step back to clean up those issues and deal with all those matters with all the potential and/or clients at that time. We have gone through a very detailed process to ensure that the issues around those were dealt with, Mr. Speaker. We are at the stage now where we will be looking at putting a third call-out for those units in the coming months, Mr.

Speaker, and I will be more than happy to share with my colleagues when that does happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Members, be aware that the time allotted for question period is now over. Item 7. Written Questions. Item 8. Returns to Written Questions. Item 9. Replies to Opening Address. Item 10. Petitions. Item 11. Responses to Petitions. Item 12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. Item 13. Tabling of Documents. Hon. Minister of Community and Government Services, Mr. Joanasie.

Item 13: Tabling of Documents

Tabled Document 255 – 6(2): Nunavut Fire Marshal's Office Annual Report 2022

Hon. David Joanasie (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table the Nunavut Fire Marshal's Office 2022 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Item 14. Notices of Motions. Item 15. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. Item 16. Motions. Item 17. First Reading of Bills. Item 18. Second Reading of Bills. Item 19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Bills 37, 38, 39, and 40 with Mr. Hickes in the Chair.

Before we proceed with the Committee of the Whole, we will break for lunch and report back at 1:30.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>House recessed at 11:47 and
Committee resumed at 13:30

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

Chairman (Mr. Hickes): Thank you. I would like to call the committee meeting to order. In Committee of the Whole, we have the following items to deal with: Bills 37, 38, 39, and 40. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are deferring the review of the Department of Education and hence, we will commence with the review of the 2024-25 Main Estimates for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, followed by the Department of Family Services. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Is the committee in agreement that we deal first with Bill 37?

Some Members: Agreed.

**Bill 37 – Appropriation (Operations &
Maintenance) Act, 2024-2025 –
Nunavut Housing Corporation –
Consideration in Committee**

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Kusugak, do you have officials that you would like to appear before the committee with you?

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Does the committee agree to allow the minister to have witnesses at its table?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses in.

When you're ready, Minister Kusugak, you can introduce your officials and proceed directly with your opening comments.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my left is Sol Vardy, Vice-president of Finance, and to my right is Mr. Eiryn Devereaux, President and CEO of the Nunavut Housing Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your patience.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, today I am here to present the 2024-25 main estimates and business plan for the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

This past fiscal year involved significant changes to the corporation, including an organizational realignment and further progress toward the goals set out in the Nunavut 3000 Strategy.

Looking ahead, 2024 will be another big year for the corporation. In alignment with our Nunavut 3000 Strategy, we are working diligently to launch a suite of new and redesigned housing programs. This includes a new Affordable Housing Policy, a proposed new Homeownership Support Policy, as well as a new Supported Housing Policy. The programs falling under these policies will aim to better meet the critical housing needs of Nunavummiut and make the application process easier.

Later this year, we hope to announce a suite of new and updated homeownership programs, including a

revitalized HAP 2.0 program, as we call it, and an expanded Down-payment Assistance Program, as well as a Home Repair Program that offers increased assistance. In the coming weeks we plan to announce the new Nunavut Affordable Housing Supply Incentive, also known as NAHSI, program approved by cabinet in December. The Nunavut Affordable Housing Supply Incentive is expected to accelerate housing supply into the market and to expand Nunavut's housing continuum through the provision of a \$150,000 capital contribution for each new affordable housing built.

In the fall of 2023, we completed our phase 1 "options identification and analysis" in relation to the current governance model for local housing organizations across Nunavut. This year we continue with phase 2 work that will include consulting with the local housing organizations and other key stakeholders to get feedback on these options. We anticipate this important work will be completed this summer/early fall with recommendations going forward to cabinet thereafter.

I will now turn to the details of the main estimates for the corporation in 2024-25.

Mr. Chairman, the corporation is requesting \$269,369,000 from the Government of Nunavut for operations and maintenance in fiscal year 2024-25, an increase of \$12,125,000 from the previous fiscal year. There are several factors contributing to this increase, including:

- a net increase of \$4,368,000 to provide funding to local housing organizations for maintenance,

administration and utilities costs associated with an increase of 155 new public housing units, bringing the total portfolio size to 6,071 units across Nunavut. In addition, this amount includes \$566,000 to support the recent fuel price increase, as well as additional funding for the annual Consumer Price Index increase to local housing organizations for administration and maintenance on existing units.

- an increase of \$4 million for improving how housing and homeownership support is provided. These resources will be used to update and redesign our housing programs, train the housing corporation staff in the delivery of the new homeownership and affordable housing programs, and marketing and communication for these new programs across Nunavut. In addition, this increase will also support our ongoing work with municipalities to plan and expand the land available for new housing projects.
- an increase of \$2,100,000 to support the next phase of delivery of the public housing tenant engagement training pilot (called "Atuquatsiarniq Iglulirijikkutnit" and to design and develop a similar training workshop for existing and prospective homeowners. Over the past year, the corporation and our partner, Ilitaqsiniq, successfully delivered this innovative tenant education program in all three regions as well as a "train the trainer" workshop to increase the number of facilitators who are able to deliver this important training.

- an increase of \$1,020,000 for one-time funding of \$770,000 required to implement the Microsoft Azure Migration project, upgrading the corporation to a cloud platform. This will provide the corporation with access to a range of tools and services over the Internet, making collaboration easier between offices, providing cost savings, and giving us added security. In addition, \$250,000 will be targeted to plan and design new information technology online application technology to make it easier for Nunavummiut to access our various homeownership and affordable housing programs.
- a net increase of \$431,000 in relation to compensation and benefits to support the additional funding needed to satisfy the cost of the collective agreement. Only a portion of the full collective agreement costs were funded in the 2023-24 fiscal year. In addition, the corporation is seeking to increase its total positions from 124 to 128. Three of these four proposed new positions will be funded by the Canada and Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- and finally, an increase of \$206,000 to accommodate staff housing lease renewal costs and utilities cost escalations.

Inuit employment continues to be a priority for the Nunavut Housing Corporation. The Nunavut Inuit employment rate has increased steadily over the past three years and as of September 30, 2023, the rate is 50 percent, or 42 of 84 funded positions.

Local housing organizations account for a significant portion of the corporation's operating budget and are included in the development of its Inuit Employment Plan. Of the 271 local housing organization positions that are filled, 228, or 84 percent, are filled by Inuit.

We will work to provide further opportunities for recruitment, training, and advancement of Inuit, such as through new training and employment opportunities created through the Nunavut 3000 Strategy. The corporation continues to support cross-training, internships, career-broadening and mentoring, as well as supervisory-level training and development. Our goal is to establish a continuum of Inuit employment, with meaningful career prospects and opportunities for sustainable advancement.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for your time today. With this proposed budget, we can continue to work toward our vision of ensuring all Nunavummiut has access to a range of affordable, accessible and suitable housing options.

My officials and I are ready to answer any questions you may have regarding the Nunavut Housing Corporation's 2024-25 main estimates and business plan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, minister. Does the chair of the standing committee have opening comments to provide? Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to provide opening comments on behalf of the Standing Committee on Community and

Economic Development on its review of the proposed 2024-25 Main Estimates and 2024-26 Business Plan of the Nunavut Housing Corporation. The corporation's proposed 2024-25 operations and maintenance appropriation from the Legislative Assembly is \$269,369,000. This represents a 4.7 percent increase from the 2023-24 main estimates. The number of positions in the corporation is increasing from 124.0 to 128.0, which represents an increase of 3.2 percent.

Members raised a number of issues and concerns during the minister's recent appearance before the standing committee. The Nunavut Housing Corporation's 2021-22 Annual Report under the *Nunavut Housing Corporation Act* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on November 7, 2022. The Nunavut Housing Corporation's 2021-22 Annual Report on Contracting, Procurement and Leasing Activities was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on March 8, 2023. The 2022-23 annual reports have not yet been tabled. The 2023-24 *Ministerial Letter of Expectation to the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Nunavut Housing Corporation* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on November 3, 2023. The response to the letter of expectation has not yet been tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

On October 20, 2016 the *Blueprint for Action on Housing - Implementation Plan for the Government of Nunavut Long-Term Comprehensive Housing and Homelessness Strategy* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly. This document contains 60 specific action items that are intended to address an extremely broad range of housing issues. The standing

committee continues to recognize that it is not practicable for the Nunavut Housing Corporation to simultaneously implement all of the blueprint's action items, and continues to encourage the corporation to prioritize its work in a clear and focused manner. The *Status of Housing Report 2022* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on November 8, 2022. The standing committee looks forward to the timely tabling of the next report.

On April 13, 2022, the federal Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs announced that the 2022 federal budget will invest \$300 million to "co-develop and launch an Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy." The extent to which the Nunavut Housing Corporation has been involved in the development of this strategy is unclear.

In May 2022, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated produced its "Nunavut Inuit Housing Action Plan." The plan indicated that a "new Inuit Housing Entity will ensure funding is used in the best way to improve housing for Inuit. Community members, municipalities, the Government of Nunavut and the Government of Canada are important partners." The extent to which the new "Inuit Housing Entity" will complement the work of the Nunavut Housing Corporation remains unclear.

On August 24, 2022 the Nunavut Housing Corporation and NCC Development Limited announced the signing of an "Agreement in Principle to pursue a strategic partnership in relation to the delivery of much-needed transitional, public, affordable and market housing units across the

territory.” On October 18, 2022 the Nunavut Housing Corporation and NCC Development Limited announced the signing of a formal “Master Partnership Agreement.” This agreement as well as the Nunavut Housing Corporation’s new “Nunavut 3000” strategy were publicly released on the same day. The standing committee looks forward to ongoing updates on the status of implementing this agreement and the new strategy.

The Nunavut Housing Corporation’s 2021-24 business plan indicated that “new management agreements were signed as of June 2020 and help clarify and define the relationship between the Nunavut Housing Corporation and the Local Housing Organizations, ensuring that the Nunavut Housing Corporation’s programs are delivered consistently across the territory.” The Nunavut Housing Corporation’s 2023-26 business plan indicated that it had “engaged a consulting firm to produce a report on Local Housing Organization governance models to see how the public housing allocation process and organizational structure can be improved.” The standing committee encourages the minister to table the report in the Legislative Assembly at the earliest opportunity.

The Nunavut Housing Corporation’s draft 2024-26 business plan indicates that one of its priorities has been to “complete a draft affordable housing / homeownership support policy and seek Cabinet/Financial Management Board approval of a permanent new affordable housing program, including an affordable housing co-investment project.” The standing committee looks forward to a detailed review of this initiative during the upcoming

consideration of the 2025-26 capital estimates.

The Nunavut Housing Corporation’s most recently tabled annual report indicates that there was a total of \$43,899,000 in public housing rent receivables as of March 31, 2022. The Nunavut Housing Corporation’s 2022-26 business plan indicated that one of its priorities for the 2022-23 fiscal year was to “monitor and review the impact of collections policy and procedures to reduce Local Housing Organization arrears and continue to develop and implement Local Housing Organization deficit recovery plans.” The standing committee supports measures being taken to assist local housing organizations in these areas.

The Nunavut Housing Corporation’s draft 2024-26 business plan indicates that “Effective in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, municipal taxes are now paid through Grants in Lieu of Property Taxes, instead of directly paid by the corporation. This funding has been moved to be reported under the Department of Community and Government Services.” The rationale for this change is not entirely clear.

That concludes my opening comments on the proposed 2024-25 Main Estimates and 2024-26 Business Plan of the Nunavut Housing Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Do any committee members have general comments to the opening comments? Seeing none, please turn to page M-IV-3. We will start off with the Nunavut Housing Corporation. Total being appropriated, \$269,369,000, and I’ll

open the floor to questions. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've got a list of questions that I would like to get into, but I would like to begin with a couple of questions on the minister's opening comments. On page 3 in the second paragraph, the last sentence indicates that "In addition, this increase will also support our ongoing work with municipalities to plan and expand land available for new housing projects." I was wondering if the minister would be able to elaborate a bit further and provide some more details and specifics on that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Savikataaq) (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's very important moving forward and following our Nunavut 3000 Plan that we stay ahead of the community's land requirements to build infrastructure. In order to do that, we have created a committee amongst our staff with invitations to other departments to take a look at what kind of land preparation is required and some communities that may not have land readily available.

We're trying to be ahead at least a year or two in advance, and we're working with the Nunavut Association of Municipalities and the hamlet councils themselves and their lands people to make sure that when it comes down to build an X number of houses in a particular community, the land is readily available and is not holding up our projects. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I understand that you are going to be working with municipalities and the Nunavut Association of Municipalities to identify requirements and areas for expansion community by community. A number of years ago, Iqaluit had passed a private land development by-law. I was just curious if this work to expand land availability would also include Iqaluit. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, it would be inclusive of that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. Looking at the housing corporation's total contribution of \$237,543,000 that is being provided by the Government of Nunavut, are there also additional funds coming through the CMHC or other organizations and, if so, can the minister provide some details? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have to find the appropriate number. We do have additional funds. The CMHC unilateral programs, we're getting \$516,000 to

deal with and administer additional programs, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I would like to move on to my next line of questioning. An issue that has been brought up in the past was the policy and process surrounding Government of Nunavut employees who retire in staff housing. I was wondering if the minister would be able to provide an update on the number of employees who have retired in staff housing so far this fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman. Actually that's one of the topics that we are working to try to rectify and look for ways to not strand, if I can use the term loosely, the government employees who are homeless after the end of their term. We're working on that, but I unfortunately don't have a figure in terms of how many have and are retiring this year that are in staff housing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Along the same line of questioning about employees retiring in staff housing, the Department of Education has identified that a significant amount of Inuktitut-speaking teachers are at or past retirement age and will be retiring very shortly.

Has the Nunavut Housing Corporation been working with the Department of Human Resources or other government departments and agencies to gauge how many employees in staff housing are at or near or beyond the retirement age? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are working with different agencies to see how many government employees we have who are ready to retire or not retiring because they are caught between having a house and not having a house. I don't have that figure, but I could assure my colleague that we are looking at ways that we can possibly have people retire without losing a place to be at. We're trying to get into the legalities and finish up on some of those issues, such as maybe turning units into public housing and/or otherwise.

We are looking at that very important issue because people should be able to retire without becoming homeless. It is a very complex topic and issue that our housing corporation is working on. I'm really hopeful that in the next few weeks, actually, that we could begin to nail down the issues around that and how we could solve them so that there are no adverse effects on staff housing units and that. We are stick-handling through that, so I appreciate the line of questioning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Understanding the significant

demand for housing in the territory as supported by the substantial public housing waitlist, I appreciate the minister's response, but I understand that the possibility of converting staff housing into public housing would be controversial. Given the fact that employees in staff housing have devoted their entire career to the Government of Nunavut and the public service, I fully support the idea of converting their staff housing into public housing.

Moving on to my next line of questioning, the utilities and maintenance of our public housing is continuing to grow substantially. Over the last number of years, I have been asking the Nunavut Housing Corporation to try to address the growing utilities and maintenance costs. I do recognize that the corporation has been updating their standards for the construction of public housing, but I was curious if there were any other avenues that have been researched as a possible means to address the growing utility costs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The corporation realizes that the better use that we have of our utilities makes our dollars go that much further. In fact, the housing units that we are building this year and next that we have started and are moving forward with have a lot better envelope, to use the term loosely, in terms of retaining heat and energy efficiency in the units. That's the first step. I am looking forward to seeing the results that it will produce in terms of using a much more

sealed unit with a lot better R-value in the houses.

Barring that, we continue to work with our engineering department and looking at where the rest of this country is going in terms of energy efficiency. As more and more heating and lighting sources become more energy efficient, we're following those closely and where it is applicable and beneficial to use that in our units, we will, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In an effort to reduce construction costs, the Nunavut Housing Corporation has been building multiplexes, which are growing larger in size over the years and they are now up to 18-plexes. Has the Nunavut Housing Corporation put consideration into accessing the Qulliq Energy Corporation's Commercial and Institutional Power Producer Program to utilize alternative energy technology to offset the utility costs of 18-plexes? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to add a little bit in terms of working towards increasing the efficiency of our homes, over the last four years, we were using federal grant money of \$8 million to start improving units in Nunavut to make better, more efficient houses in terms of windows and doors.

In 2022-23, for example, in Baker Lake we did a number of houses in replacing windows, hot water tanks, and boilers/furnaces. We're just wrapping up this four-year work on that and we hope to continue to be able to do that in terms of creating better windows, better boilers, and better furnaces.

In terms of going forward and working with the Qulliq Energy Corporation, yes, we plan to begin to look at ways we can take advantage of the Net Metering Program and install it into our units so that the units can begin to pay a bit for themselves. The more money we put into net metering into our housing units, it can only be beneficial to the corporation at the end of the day. It is very important that we use all energy we can use to ensure that we're not using energy that we don't have to use, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the minister's response. As I'm sure he is aware, I have been raising this specific net metering issue with the Nunavut Housing Corporation for a number of years. Again, I do appreciate the response to continue the dialogue with the Qulliq Energy Corporation.

I would like to ask the minister to take it a step further and commit to conducting a thorough analysis on what it would look like to incorporate alternative energy into 18-plexes or some of the other larger public housing complexes and identify some possible areas that the corporation could utilize and report back

to the committee over the coming year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's not too often that I am a step ahead of my colleague on this particular topic. Mr. Chairman, we're already working on that. In fact, we're looking at 166 units to do the net metering project on. I really hope that it's something that is beneficial and going forward. We're already looking at net metering and other programs that we could use. We hear my colleague has been pounding the table on this and other important issues around energy efficiency and wise use of it, and we're listening. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Kudos to the minister and Nunavut Housing Corporation officials. I truly appreciate the response.

Would the minister be able to provide some details to the committee at a later date on your findings or at least an executive summary on the findings? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Not a problem, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Just before I go on to the next person on the list, I'll just remind members that this is a one-page

document, so if you have any questions, put your hand up. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have like three questions. The *Status of Housing Report 2022* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on November 8, 2022. The question is: what specific items in the Blueprint for Action on Housing will be prioritized during the 2024-25 fiscal year? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those priorities are all outlined in the Nunavut 3000 program and it is our priority to implement everything within the Nunavut 3000 envelope. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hopefully my constituents are tuned in so that they have an idea of where the housing corporation is going in this time of need.

I'll move on, Mr. Chairman. On April 13, 2022 the federal Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs announced that the 2022 federal budget will invest \$300 million to "co-develop and launch an Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy." The question is: to what extent has the Nunavut Housing Corporation been involved in its development? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have been able to get a member on that board. I think it's very important that we have a member sitting on that board to participate and being able to include concerns and ideas from our territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's the first time I'm going to agree with the minister. Yes, we do need a member on the board.

I'll move on to my last question here, Mr. Chairman. In May 2022 Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated released its Nunavut Inuit Housing Action Plan. The plan indicated that "The new Inuit Housing Entity will ensure funding is used in the best way to improve housing for Inuit." Community members, municipalities, the Government of Nunavut, and the Government of Canada are important partners.

Now the question is and this will be my last question, Mr. Chairman: to what extent will the new Inuit housing entity undertake work that has previously been under the responsibility of the Nunavut Housing Corporation? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have said many times in this House that the corporation is willing and we're able to help NTI in this case with the housing issue. At this point, I don't know what they are doing. We're here to help them if they require our help, but as

of now, I don't know what that entity will entail or any details pertaining to that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Quqgiaq.

Mr. Quqgiaq: That was my last question.

Chairman: Following the names on my list, Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to first go back to the opening comments on page 4 of 5, halfway down. It talks about "a net increase of \$431,000 in relation to compensation and benefits..." The last sentence in that paragraph speaks of "Three of these four proposed new positions will be funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation."

I made a comment the other day in this Chamber that sometimes when we get these positions that are funded through third party entities, and then the funding stops, it doesn't relieve the level of expectation that the service delivery is going to continue.

Maybe if I can just get a bit more information on how these three positions are funded through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and is there a sunset to that agreement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These three positions are term positions because they're not long-term funded. Because they are a three-to-four-

year funding, they are term positions and we're not sure if we will be given extra funding to continue them, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister. Maybe if the minister could give me a little bit more detail on what the scope of work that these positions are going to be tasked to do. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will provide you with this information.

One is the senior system analyst, an e-Builder and AssetPlanner. They provide technical management and systems administration operations, in a nutshell.

The other one is a senior reporting analyst; assists with year-end reports to meet legislative requirements, coordinates annual audits in conjunction with the Office of the Auditor General, and participates in special research projects, and so on.

The third one is the budget analyst; helps preparing main estimates, Financial Management Board submissions, business plans, expenditure forecasting, business cases, and so on.

In a nutshell, those are those positions, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It sounds like those roles are going to have, hopefully, some positive impact on accounting and the reporting at the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

That just leads kind of further support, not a position, but a concern that when we get people into these positions that are providing important work, and then that third party funding ends, it puts the onus on the corporation and thus on the Assembly to approve increases in funding to keep those positions in place. That is just a comment on that, but I hope the minister continues to try to lobby for third party support for positions, but to try to get as long term as possible.

My next question, Mr. Chairman, the Nunavut Housing Corporation's draft '24-25 main estimates indicated that a number of positions located here in Iqaluit's directorate office is increasing from 44 from last fiscal year or the current fiscal year to 52 in the '24-25 fiscal year. Again, what new positions are being created and why are they required? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I couldn't agree more with the comments prior to the question. We will continue to lobby and work to try to get more funding so that these term positions end up longer and longer as we can. It is true; we have very important work to be doing and it's always hard to fill the positions when there is no funding for them. We will continue down that path of ensuring that we can make the contribution agreements last

beyond the years that the federal government is committed to.

In terms of the PYs, or person-years, in the Arviat headquarters there are four maintenance positions based in Arviat reclassified to directorate, plus one intern director program, and in Iqaluit directorate, four maintenance positions from headquarters in Arviat to four new positions, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That intern program interests me. I have often can be quoted from this Chamber as well that I think it's a much underutilized program. I know the Sivuliqtiksat and other leadership programs that the government does support, but we're talking maybe a couple dozen positions at most across the entire Government of Nunavut. To me, there should be 200. We need to have more people given the opportunity to advance in their career goals and internships. I have been a beneficiary of that myself that helped me to this Chamber, Mr. Chairman, and I think it is a very important initiative.

The intern is for the director position. Is there somebody internally that they're going to be looking at to appoint to this position or is this going to be an advertised position? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Mr. Chairman, I couldn't agree more. Internships are very

important. I could say that at the housing corporation, we have some incredible staff. Unfortunately we all time out at some point. I think the Government of Nunavut is getting close to the second round of long-term employees retiring and the housing corporation is no different.

We have an individual right now on staff that is an incredible young man and working and, I believe, a very big asset to our corporation. We need to do more of that. We already have someone on and working in that internship, and it's turning out really good. I encourage myself, the other departments, and my colleagues to continue to look to ensure that internships are taken full advantage of because we can never have too many. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The next question I have is the '24-26 business plan indicates that the budget for Corporate Governance will increase by 266 percent, from just under \$3 million in the current fiscal year to over \$10 million in the next fiscal year. How was the amount of this increase determined? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question. The Corporate Governance increase of \$7.5 million: the compensation and benefits are \$1.4 million; purchased services, \$600,000; and contract services, \$5.5 million. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The \$5.5 million for contract services is quite a significant increase. Can the minister maybe go into a little bit more detail on what they intend to do with those new funds? Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In a nutshell, the housing corporation and the local housing organizations have to go through staff training and support. We are going through the homeownership training and tenant education program, which I believe is going really well.

Just to elaborate a bit on that, we're working with Iilitaqsinik and they're going to communities and teaching individuals who have never owned or not owned, but have been in their own home or renting a home, what it entails to be a renter of a unit, everything from making sure that you close taps and how to tighten doorknobs, to just regular maintenance of a home, how to wipe down windows, and so on, some very basic things many of us take for granted. If you've never had to be responsible for a housing unit, you wouldn't be aware of those. They're bringing those programs to people who are on the housing waiting list so that when they do enter into a house, they give it more respect and better maintenance of the unit.

Also, moving forward with the new homeownership programming, we will be including that in terms of having programs on what it takes to be a

homeowner budgeting-wise and maintenance-wise. I think this is a very worthwhile program. We now end up having people who have never rented a unit or owned a unit to be able to go in with some kind of idea of budgeting, how to maintain a unit, make sure that you are not running out of fuel, and so on and so forth.

That's part of the contract services we're doing, tenant education, and also the consulting and support for project management is also part of that contracting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for that response. I look forward to see how that develops over the next year.

The contract, procurement and leasing report was tabled almost exactly a year ago. When will the '22-23 report be ready for tabling in the Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We anticipate tabling that almost a year to the date of when it was tabled the last time, Mr. Chairman. I anticipate being able to table that during this session, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the record, this coming Friday will be the anniversary of that tabling.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On April 13, 2022 the federal Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs announced that the 2022 federal budget will invest \$300 million to “co-develop and launch an Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy.” Mr. Chairman, to what extent has the Nunavut Housing Corporation been involved in its development and a date expected to be completed? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think things are going well on that front, Mr. Chairman.

As much as I want to give you an answer, my colleague to my right is itching to get the microphone. If I could have Mr. Devereaux answer through you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Devereaux.

Mr. Devereaux: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for the question. I think all provinces and territories were excited, as I'm sure all members in this House were, of an announcement of a \$4 billion urban, rural and northern fund for housing for indigenous communities. Since that announcement, the federal government has been working on the development of a strategy and how to push that \$4 billion out across Canada. We're definitely involved.

With the minister and me, we spoke to the federal minister and president of the CMHC. We realized early in this

strategy that the federal government was taking a slightly different approach. Instead of it coming from the centre in Ottawa, they were supporting the creation of a new indigenous-led organization that was called NICHI. That was part of that \$300 million referenced earlier. It was to create NICHI and for that indigenous entity, really, to drive the development of the strategy for the \$4 billion urban, rural, and northern.

We were really fortunate to get somebody from Nunavut. Actually one of the senior executive officials with the corporation sits on the board of NICHI, so we have a direct voice right now in terms of that particular process. I can't speak to when the federal government is going to finalize the strategy that outlines how that \$4 billion is going to be disbursed. I think that all provinces and territories are hopeful that that will occur sometime this year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Just before I go back to Mr. Hickes, unless NICHI is a new word, if it is an acronym, can you please let us know what NICHI is an acronym for or is it a new word? Mr. Devereaux.

>> *Laughter*

Mr. Devereaux: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My apologies. I don't know. We will have to get back to the members. I don't know. All I know is the NICHI name. It's a new entity created at the federal level. My apologies. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you. I do hope when they actually roll out the funding of that \$4 billion, it's not on a normal per capita basis. Typically whenever the federal government announces contributions in the billions of dollars, for every billion dollar that they announce, we usually get a million. That would be like \$4 million we would get, which wouldn't make much of a dent in our housing needs.

I am going to switch gears a little bit. I would like to talk about the continuum of housing a little bit. The condo program has been brought up earlier today. We have public housing, staff housing, private housing, private market rentals, but there is also co-op housing. I think Iqaluit is the only community that actually has co-op housing. I think it needs to be said how a co-op housing structure is created and maintained and how it keeps people's rents low.

The objective of this question that I'm asking, Mr. Chairman, is I have co-op housing in my constituency, and I do know a number of Government of Nunavut employees that live in co-op housing. For some reason, it's not considered market rent, so they're not eligible for any of the homeownership benefits that the Government of Nunavut provides to its staff. It's a matter of \$150 or \$200 a month difference in what the policy states for an amount versus what the rent is being paid.

I would like to get a like a little bit of confirmation on exactly how co-op housing is structured and I would like to get the housing minister's position on whether residents of that co-op housing

that are Government of Nunavut employees should be eligible to take advantage of homeownership or market rental subsidies. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Earlier this morning we had an exchange on making adjustments and changes to the different programs that the corporation has, I think, that covers the envelope in terms of all housing should be able to qualify for the different programs that are out there.

In terms of the affordable housing envelope, co-op housing, not-for-profit housing and condos are going to be all included in terms of creating co-op housing units and getting funding for that through the homeownership programs. We are taking a look at those to be more inclusive and I think it's important.

It's getting very hard for anybody who is out there, whether they're in a co-op unit or private, to be able to maintain and sustain your homes. They would definitely be included in some of the programs that pertain to those in the new programs that we are developing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to get a commitment from the minister then that if it is anticipated to include co-op housing GN employees in the homeownership rebate programs, they would do so sooner rather than

later. I'm sure he can have a conversation with his finance counterpart on the cabinet and work to have that happen sooner rather than later, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to go on to my next question. When we look at the amount of \$206,000 to accommodate staff housing lease renewal costs and utility cost escalators, I know I'm delving close to capital, but it's a leased unit, so that's part of the O&M budget. How many leased units are currently in the inventory for staff housing units? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, to respond to his comments before the question, as my colleague had begun to know me, my purpose here is not to delay things to get done and it always has been how we could make this thing happen because the sooner we can do these changes, then the better and bigger the benefit is for those we are making the changes for.

My colleague has my commitment to ensure that in terms of the programs that he was asking on, yes, I have committed to making sure that if there are programs we are working on that are going to help Nunavummiut and government employees, then my commitment is to make it happen sooner rather than later, Mr. Chairman.

In terms of the housing corporation's leased units, there are approximately 1,143. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you. Just before I continue with my line of questioning here, I appreciate the minister's comments because I, for one, and I am sure that a number of my colleagues were very concerned when we saw in the business plan that the Staff Housing Policy update was deferred again or delayed. It is very concerning when we are talking about retention and recruitment of employees. We understand that there are serious shortages of housing. The sooner that we finalize those staff housing policies and, if needed, implement new programs to help secure either more housing or at least provide different options for Government of Nunavut staff, sooner rather than later, so I believe I have a valid concern that there is again another delay in the Staff Housing Policy development. I will leave that alone.

I would like to go back to the leased units. I believe that about three years ago, we increased the budget for the Nunavut Housing Corporation by about \$5 million to help increase its lease inventory. Again, I do realize that there are only so many units available for lease, but I would like to get some indication from the minister of how the trend has been for the last couple of years on unit availability as well as how costs are escalating for these leases. I would like to get the minister's perspective on how things have trended for the last couple of years. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There really definitely haven't been any spikes or drops; it has been pretty flat over the last few years on that front, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) I have no more names on my list. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, minister and to your officials. Thank you for the plug there, mentioning Baker Lake and the windows with what's supposed to be an increased R-value, but unfortunately, there have been numerous complaints in Baker Lake when some of those new windows were installed on housing units that are at least 30 years old. The older windows were actually warmer than the newer windows that were installed. I found that rather odd.

I'm assuming the tenants complained to the local housing office, but I'm wondering: was there a trend that year, and it would have been done about three years ago, of numerous housing offices in Nunavut seeing a spike in having to pay more for fuel after these windows were replaced? Has there been a trend that's known or not? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Mr. Chairman, thanks for the question, but I think that if there were more windows put in to a majority of the houses, then you would see a spike or a change one way or the other. The number of houses that had new windows put into them are not significant enough to see the spike or

change, but this is the first I have heard that it was felt that the windows were colder than the older ones. Normally, they would have put in more energy-efficient windows to replace the old ones. I guess we could look into it, but there would be no significant change in energy loss or efficiency. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. On page 2 of the minister's statement regarding the Home Repair Program, "Later this year, we hope to announce a suite of new and updated homeownership programs, including a revitalized HAP 2.0 program... and an expanded Down-payment Assistance Program, as well as a Home Repair Program..."

I'm wondering: has the income threshold been changed to meet today's salaries? I was looking at the Fuel Tank Replacement Program on the Nunavut Housing Corporation's website and the brochure is dated 2014. Those are based off of 2014 salaries and over the years, there have been increases in expenses. With that usually comes an increase in salary, just to try to meet the needs of daily lives of trying to live. I'm wondering: has the income threshold been amended yet or will that be amended soon to meet today's prices? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We support that very much. It's one of the things that we're looking

at. In terms of income threshold across our programs, it needs to be adjusted and that's one of the adjustments that we are looking at throughout our programs and the suite of programs that we look to bring forward over this year, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I'm glad that's going to be looked at because the more... We have four mines operating now in Nunavut, as you know, and we have a very young population working there and some of them are dual-income and the way things are right now, they won't be eligible for some of these programs. I'm very glad that that's being looked at and hopefully, it will be amended so that they will be able to access at least part of it. If it's in a laddered fashion or one way or another, at least they will be able to access part of the housing programs. I'm very glad to hear that.

Moving on to page 3 of the minister's statements, the very top, it says, "a net increase of \$4,368,000 to provide funding to local housing organizations for maintenance, administration and utilities costs..." I'm wondering: has the corporation begun looking at whether or not some local housing organizations will need to see an increase in their person years to accommodate all these new housing units that are being built now with this Nunavut 3000 program? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to add to my colleague's comments about the high employment of our young people in the mining sector, in fact, earlier this year, we had a meeting with some of the mining sector, in particular the ones working in the Kivalliq, and in those discussions was talk about housing for those workers and seeing how we could work together to deal with that matter.

In terms of increasing the workforce, as we move forward and more houses are being built in the communities, there definitely will be a look to see if the current workforce is able to maintain the number of units going into the communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Hickers): Thank you. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I think my last question is regarding additional person years, not with the local housing offices but more with the Nunavut Housing Corporation headquarters. If a job is advertised for the headquarters and you cannot fill it at the headquarters, will the corporation look at utilizing the new Remote Work Policy that the Government of Nunavut enacted? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we would. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. I have no more names on my list. Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to go back to a few items. In the arrears there, the minister stated that it's at \$43 million something and it's growing every year. How often are evictions done on an average year for arrears? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Depending on the aggressiveness of the local housing organization, it doesn't happen too often, Mr. Chairman. I don't have a figure in terms of what community and how many, but it doesn't happen very often, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Staying under arrears, how often is wage garnishment issued to delinquent renters? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The tenant relation officers in the communities work with their local housing boards and senior administrators of the local housing organization to take a look at and try to decrease the number of delinquent and arrears in each community. It is very high and where there are employees, government employees or other employees that are in those units, a discussion happens between the local tenant officer and the tenant to see if they should be going to a garnishee. That happens on occasion. Again, I don't know exactly how many of those there are; I'm sure we could look into it.

Also, in some instances and many instances, the arrears are happening with people on low income or social assistance and in those cases, there is a discussion with them to see if we can work with the appropriate department to see if they could at least begin to make \$5, \$10, or \$20 a month payments on top of the amount that they have to pay. They're not asking for a lot of money, but there are attempts to do that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister stated that some or a lot of these arrears are low-income earners, which would be \$60 a month. That's only \$720 a year per household, so it would take a lot of low renters. My suspicion is that a lot of this is by high-income earners that are paying close to the maximum. I know that the local housing associations are in charge of collecting rent, but the Nunavut Housing Corporation has management agreements with all of these local housing associations. Does the minister know what percentage or how many high-income earners that are paying maximum rent are not paying the rent? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We don't have that figure in front of us, but I'm sure that if we dig enough, we will be able to find that information. There are a lot of low-income arrears. It's amazing how quickly they add up, but I could ask to get a better detailed breakdown in terms of what income and what the arrears are. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) If I can just get clarification on the arrears here, it's at \$43 million and, if I recall and the minister will correct me if I'm wrong, that \$43 million will be deducted from the funds that local housing associations or organizations get. I think I'm correct. Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know the particular details on how that will work, but I will definitely get back to the colleague, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is nothing in the management agreement. It doesn't really matter if a local housing association has millions in arrears; it will not affect the amount of funding that is given to the local housing association from the housing corporation. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If Mr. Deveraux could maybe elaborate a bit on the details in terms of what we collect and what we give the local associations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Deveraux.

Mr. Deveraux: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for the question. If I understand the question

correctly, arrears that accumulate at the local housing organization level are the responsibility of that local housing organization and other entities and other communities aren't.

In our funding formula, when we identify the cost to deliver the public housing, from that, we deduct the amount of targeted rent collection. If an LHO doesn't achieve that targeted rent collection, then it's their responsibility to figure out how to make that up. In some cases, they seem to find other sources or reduce expenditures or they might see a deficit grow.

If I understand correctly, other communities wouldn't be negatively impacted if a certain community was collecting lower amounts of rent. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Maybe I didn't make myself clear. I was not concerned about arrears from one community affecting another community. I was asking about...okay, I'll take Arviat for example. If Arviat's local housing authority was in the arrears by \$2 million, would the \$2 million that is in arrears be deducted from the funds that they normally get to operate the local housing association from the Nunavut Housing Corporation? Thank you.

Chairman: I believe Mr. Deveraux said that there was a threshold, so maybe taking Mr. Savikataaq's question and using that threshold and what that threshold is might be useful. Because it's associated with the last question, I'll go directly to Mr. Deveraux.

Mr. Deveraux: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for the follow-up. I think maybe how I would explain it in my mind is that if a local housing organization was not collecting its rents, then in theory, they would likely incur a bigger deficit and would have to come up with a deficit recovery plan on how to do that. It might be through the future collections of those arrears or trying other means to make up that difference. When we determine the cost of the delivery of the public housing program for any specific community, from that amount, we provide funding up to a value assuming that the LHO is collecting the rents. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Staying on public housing units but a different topic, I know that every year the cost goes up to operate a public housing unit. What is that figure at, the last figures that they have, the yearly cost to operate one public housing unit? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. About \$29,000 plus or minus. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that. Going on to a different matter now, we know that we see our requests for proposals going out or contracts being tendered for contract work because a person is not filling a position, because they can't fill that position or they can't

fill it in a timely manner, an indeterminate position.

I just want to get a grasp on how much work is being contracted out at the Nunavut Housing Corporation's headquarters. Are there any contracts being issued for a position that is vacant and, if there is, can I get a number on how many? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Overall, within the housing corporation in terms of dealing with land development and those other technical positions that we're having trouble filling, I would say it's about 10 to 15 positions across the corporation that we have to fill that way, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Would consultants be a part of the 10 to 15 positions or is that just contracts? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: That's correct, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you. I'm not sure. He said that's correct, so that's contractors and consultants. Thank you.

Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: I said that's correct to both of them, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: I only heard one correct. Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Going back to staff housing, the minister talked about staff housing being converted to a public housing or something like that. People are retiring and it has been brought up and he said it's a complex issue and he's working on it. I just want to dig into it just a little bit more. When a staff housing unit is converted into a public housing unit, does it go into the general stock and the person has to apply for it or does the person who is in it get to stay in it even if they have not applied for public housing? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Maybe I'll explain a little bit more. Mr. Chairman, in the discussion I had earlier regarding staff retiring and end up having to get out of staff housing, I had said that we are looking at ways to make it easier for individuals to retire and not be homeless.

I had said that one of things that we are working on is to see if maybe we can't convert at the end of the day the staff housing the individual is in, if it's a government staff housing unit, would they not be able to convert that to a public housing unit and then they would be in it, but that would be at the discretion of the housing association at the end of the day. They would have a say in it.

Definitely, the goal is to not have an individual homeless. Also included in that envelope is taking a look at things like affordable housing units and other

ways, maybe through co-op housing, but we're at the very infancy of trying to do that to ensure that people who are retiring from the government after many years of service are not left homeless.

Mr. Chairman, we're not talking about a lot of people either. We're talking about retiring Nunavummiut that are in staff housing. I would say it's probably around 20 people at the end of the day that this would impact, but we are looking at those. If my colleague has some other ideas in terms of what we can do to ensure that they don't end up homeless, I would sure appreciate some input. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know the minister has a complex problem and I agree with it, and it's something that does need to be worked on because I do have some constituents that are at retirement age that do want to retire, but they're in government staff housing. Even if they put their name into the public housing waitlist, if they're not overcrowded, if they're already housed, then they're pretty far down the scale of being awarded a public housing unit, so that's why I brought it up. Does the person stay in and jump queue? It's something that has to be dealt with, but it's not an easy problem to solve, I agree with the minister.

Staying on positions here, can I get an update on the vice-president? I believe there was one or two that was advertised. The new vice-president, has it been filled yet? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, my colleague sees how complex it could get. If an individual is in a staff housing unit that's being converted into a public housing unit, is the individual that's in there jumping queue? Those are the kinds of complex issues we have. They sound simple at the front, but they can get pretty technical.

In terms of the vice-president position my colleague referred to, we're just going through the process of filling that position now as it's closed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have gone back and forth with the minister on this affordable housing issue a few times. Can I just get the minister's position on which is more affordable, renting affordable housing or renting public housing, if you have the same income and we will take for average, let's say, \$100,000 household income? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know. There are so many more variables than that, Mr. Chairman. I think social housing is probably the cheapest there is out there, but in terms of that, it's not that simple. It's a little bit more complex than that. It depends on a few other factors than those than my colleague gave. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the minister's opening

comments on page 2, it is capital, but it's mentioned there, "...Nunavut's housing continuum through the provision of a \$150,000 capital contribution for each" affordable housing unit.

I would just like to get an understanding on this. We have the down-payment assistance program and now there's this for affordable housing. Can someone access this funding that wants to get a house that's under affordable housing that person can build their own house and also get the down-payment assistance program? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The short answer to that is yes, NAHSI, as it's called, the down-payment program, yes, the Nunavut Affordable Housing Supply Incentive is a program that you could be able to apply for that. It helps with the construction of it and the answer to his question is yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you. This will have to be my last question. Keeping on that topic, if we can get an understanding of there is a budget for it, is it going to be a regional budget, is it going to be first come, first served? How is the allocation and awarding process of the affordable housing unit? Taking that \$150,000 capital contribution for example, does each region get a certain amount? First come, first served? Is it certain communities? What are the criteria? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We want to hit every community in Nunavut on all of our projects and this is one of them where we would like to see affordable housing across Nunavut. We're just finalizing the program right now. Those questions my colleague is asking, we would like to make it so that it's not a first come, first served, but we're rolling out those funds and the program highlights in the next few weeks. I'll ensure that all of my colleagues in this House are supplied with a copy of those, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. I currently have no names on my list. I would like to go back to the arrears question that Mr. Savikataaq was asking. I know the minister committed to providing some detailed information through correspondence with the committee, but out of the \$44 million in arrears, how many clients does that entail? Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll include that in my response, Mr. Chairman, because not necessarily everybody who has arrears is within the housing envelope right now. If you would indulge me, I'll definitely get back to you with those details. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you for that commitment. The next name I have on my list: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask further to the question that was just asked about arrears. Housing rents are different and government staff housing units have different rent scales too. With

housing, they base it on the household income and the rent payable ends up being different. From what I heard earlier, it's apparently very different for people who live in government staff housing, especially when they can't really quit their jobs. If they quit, then they would lose their house. I heard the response saying that they will put a lot more consideration into it.

However, the policy that was brought out by the housing corporation where a person becomes 60 years old, they don't need to pay rent anymore, even if they're making good money. Can it also be applied to people living in government staff housing? Can the rent scale be lowered for people who are 60 years of age and older? There is a big difference between public housing and staff housing. Has your department ever noticed that or made any considerations on it? Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All those things are being looked at, including the rent scales, as the prices are always going up. As I said, it's currently around \$29,000 to operate a housing unit. Some people don't pay any rent, but it costs money to operate a housing unit.

For people who are working and will be retiring or no longer working, as they live in government staff housing, they have to end up working longer because they are scared of losing their house. We are reviewing it at this time. There are only about 20 employees who are in that situation.

How can the housing corporation solve that? Maybe if those units are handed over to the local housing organization, then the former government worker will no longer have to vacate the house. If the local housing organization takes it over as public housing, then they will have to follow the rules that the public housing tenants follow. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know it's very difficult to deal with, but I believe they should be standardized and they should be more similar to each other, and then more people will be interested in becoming homeowners.

I'm over 60 years old and I'm a homeowner. I find that it's better to stay in public housing when you're at my age. That's what I have noticed because I am envious of the older people that no longer have to pay for their rent. They are in our age group now and we're not teenagers anymore. We make a similar amount of money and they don't have to pay for their rent anymore. People who are living in staff housing units should be considered along those lines too. They do have to deal with a lot of challenges too. This is just a comment.

I would like to move on to something else. I would like to ask you how many buildings in the communities which are supposed to be elders' homes. They are usually multiplexes. How many of them are in Nunavut, on Inuit lands that are supposed to be for elders, but they have been converted to homes for young

people instead? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We don't have a breakdown that says that in this particular community there are elder homes that are being used by younger people. We don't have that breakdown. Once we get that information, I can provide it to my colleague. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the minister. I will try to keep an eye out for the information about my question.

In the House here, I am always going to strongly speak on behalf of homes for elders. They have elder homes in Iqaluit and Igloolik. That's not what I'm talking about. If I try to get us to envision that in the communities, it probably won't happen in my lifetime. I'm asking about something that can come in the future. We're always expecting something. I'm always expecting I'm no longer going to be around or I'm going to be feeble when I get old.

With that being the case, there is a need for elder homes that are multiplexes where elders can peacefully age and have caregivers because some people are sent out even though they're not sick at all. They get sent out because they don't have enough people to look after them or watch over them. I would really like to see more elder homes built.

Based on what I said, before Nunavut was created, there were buildings being constructed for elders. Have you ever thought of reactivating that and build elder homes or does the corporation still do that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've had discussions with our Premier and the Premier is always saying that elders have to come first. Elders' needs have to be first. I have heard that and understood it.

With our mandate here from the Premier, my colleagues and I are always thinking and talking about that. There are many elders that will need proper housing. How can we make the houses that are being built in the communities to be more available for elders? We are working on that.

I hear what my colleague is saying. There are elders' facilities. With Family Services and the health department, we will work with all those departments because elders don't need to be sent out if they have a proper, welcoming home already. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Ms. Killiktee. I didn't see that. Next name on my list is Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing me again. I thought I was done, but Ms. Killiktee triggered a memory. When we talk about elder-specific housing units, not elder facilities or elder care, such as what we have here in Iqaluit, I think it was about four or five years ago there were some concerns

raised by some residents on family members living with other elders in those units and creating disturbances. It was mentioned by Ms. Killiktee that our elders need a safe place to reside. I know those are elder-specific units.

Have there been any issues brought to the minister's attention on other family members? I don't want to say taking over because lot of times you're trying to help your family find a safe place to sleep, but at the same time, if the policy is such that those are elder-specific housing, are there any issues that have been brought to the minister's attention? Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: No there hasn't, Mr. Chairman. There hasn't been any brought to my attention, Mr. Chairman. The only thing I hear often is that we need to get elder-specific housing and more of it in Nunavut, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just also reminded to enquire if there are family members living in those elder-specific units and the elder passes away or reaches a level of care need that can't be accomplished in those units and they have to leave that unit and go into a care facility, what happens if there are family members residing in that unit? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When a house is leased, all the tenants have to be included on that list. If there are individuals that are not on the tenant document, then they are not tenants and they have to leave the building or the house. There are instances in some communities I'm aware of where an elder passes away or they need to move from the community for one reason or another, we've had issues with trying to make sure that everybody that is not on that list is vacated. We've done that in a number of ways, by finding them a more suitable place in which to go is one they do, and then the other one is to come to some sort of agreement between the individuals who are staying in the unit without an agreement and the local housing association. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to be clear, if an elder is living in one of the Iqaluit elder-specific housing units, can they add children to their lease? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That would be something that the local housing organization, in this case Iqaluit, then would have to deal with. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have just a comment and a request.

Again, I'm going back over four- or five year-old information. When Ms. Killiktee was asking the questions, it triggered a memory.

I would like to get the minister to follow up with the Iqaluit Housing Authority to see if there have been any issues reported with non-residents of those elders' units contributing to disruptions or leading to any complaints from other residents in there. Again, I don't have any current incidents, but I remember it used to be an issue and I just wanted to see if that has been rectified or not since then. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My bad; my mind was still going along. Within communities we have the four-plex elders' units and I have just been informed that we're talking specifically about the ones behind NorthMart. In those cases, I believe they can't put their grandchildren or great-grandchildren or children on those lists. In situations where it has happened, they have been trying to find them a suitable location or an alternate place to live. I'm sorry if I confused that situation, but thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Just before I go on to my next name, we will take a 20-minute break.

>>Committee recessed at 15:16 and resumed at 15:39

Chairman: Good afternoon. I would like to call the committee meeting back

to order. We're here to go through the Nunavut Housing Corporation's operations and maintenance budget, and the next person on my list: Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question concerns the housing units that are to be built and the land lots. I think a lot of meetings have taken place with your staff through your department and others on the land lots for housing development. My question includes what I reminded myself of earlier. Are they all caught up now? The staff members were holding teleconferences and Zoom meetings in particular that I often noticed. Are the communities on pace to develop land lots for housing? That's my first question. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you. Yes, to date, the land lots will be ready for units that started being constructed last year and units that are being constructed this year. In fact, we are preparing for the following year and the subsequent years before any buildings are erected. We will be preparing in advance as we don't want to be behind and we have a panel where we constantly meet with hamlets along with the Nunavut Association of Municipalities and different organizations that we have to work with, such as the Qulliq Energy Corporation, road construction and maintenance. We are on pace and we will be on pace with the development going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for this very good news. I like what you said. I was going to include the utilities like the poles, whether it's a little away from the community hubs, and different units that are built, but as you responded to it already, I thank you for that.

I would like to move on to tenant leasing agreements or tenancy agreements, as they may be called, that people sign when they move into a housing unit. If the person getting a housing unit wished to have a co-signer with someone older than 18, are those well noted or are they neglected all together? I'll ask that first. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committees in each community and the agreements that are arrived at with the tenants are noted. In fact, anyone making a household salary should have their disclosure. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I asked that question because in the communities, whether an elder is in a house with someone or the elder is just with one child, when no co-signers are there, they would have to leave the premise. Today in 2024, I don't know if that is still practised, but taking out residents after they have lost their loved one does not look good. They're mourning and now they're worried about where they're going to

live, and I have seen that first-hand myself.

The staff should be more diligent on the tenant leasing agreements and perhaps have a reminder to revise the leasing agreements. Are there any actions that have taken place toward this or is it status quo? Do the agreements that were signed 30, 40, or even 50 years ago remain the same without any revisions? Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The tenant agreements are done through local housing associations and the tenant. One would think that since they live in the same community, they would be aware of tenants who may have to vacate the premises. We will look further into the contents of the tenant agreements and what changes may be made. We will look into that, Mr. Chairman. I'll end my response there, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To rephrase it, I'm referring to the tenant leasing agreements with local housing organizations. From the date it was signed, have any revisions taken place afterwards or is it current to today's reality? Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We don't know when this tenant agreement has been revised or not. The tenant agreements in the communities are set by their local housing authority. I don't know whether or not these agreements have been reviewed thoroughly by the housing corporation. However, we could look into it to see if improvements may be made and where improvements should be made to make a difference when families are going through hardships. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would really like to see if they're updated. A lot of the roles and responsibilities of local housing organizations have been stripped by the housing corporation. Perhaps due to this reason, not one thought has been given to review the tenant leasing agreement. It's nothing new. This is more of a comment and I don't have any questions at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. That's just a comment. I have no more names on my list. (interpretation ends) Nunavut Housing Corporation. Detail of Expenditures, to be voted on. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: My apologies, Mr. Chairman. I just stepped back into the Chamber. I just have a few more questions.

The minister had previously indicated that he will be tabling the procurement

report for the Nunavut Housing Corporation towards the end of this sitting. Will the minister be tabling the Nunavut Housing Corporation's annual report at the same time? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. Just for further clarification, there are two annual reports outstanding, 2022-23 and 2021-22. Can the minister indicate which annual reports or if both annual reports will be tabled? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to return to an issue I brought up earlier in the sitting with regard to the Iqaluit public housing wait-list. I appreciate the minister's written response that I did receive earlier this week. One of the questions that I had posed was the activities of the local housing authorities to encourage and assist public housing wait-list individuals to actively update their

application status. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The local housing organizations are always asking the tenants and those on the waiting list to update their statuses, whether they are still housed or still homeless, one or the other. That activity continues using the tenant relation officers in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll move on to the next question. In the minister's written response, he had indicated that the public housing wait-list in Iqaluit had reduced from 563 to 313 applicants, about 250 applicants, and the minister also noted that there are five reasons: applicants obtained housing or applicants received public housing or applicants deceased or applicants had not updated their application for more than 24 months.

The first three reasons seem straightforward, but the last one is a bit more of a concern: individuals removed from the wait-list for not updating their applications. Would the minister be able to provide how many of those 250 individuals that were removed were removed because they had not updated their applications? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We don't have that breakdown, but over time, I'm sure we could try to find that breakdown, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I would like to move on to my next line of questioning and it's with regard to rental arrears. Is there any sort of policy in place to provide public housing tenants with recurring or regular statements of outstanding balances? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Mr. Chairman, yes, we do and we provide it to the individuals or tenants. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that clarification, minister. How often are public housing tenants receiving notices of outstanding balances? Would it be annually or quarterly? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't get that far into the woods or weeds, but I could assure my colleague that it's on a regular basis, especially those in arrears are notified

that “You are in arrears, this is how much you’re in arrears, and please come to our office and we will work with you to rectify the situation.” It happens a lot more than annually; depending on the local organization, how often that happens. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for committing to look into that. Every local housing authority or organization is facing the same issue with regard to arrears and the challenges of collecting rent. I would just like to ask the minister, while he is looking into the matter, just to identify whether or not there is some sort of standardized policy to assist all the LHOs so that they all have the same sort of mechanism to inform public housing tenants of their outstanding balances at recurring intervals. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our regional workers within the housing corporation are constantly working with the local housing organizations to deal with their arrear problems. Some of them are working through collection agencies or a more aggressive way of asking people to get caught up on their arrears. Mr. Chairman, there are many different ways that they are approaching this, but our regional offices work with each local housing organization that asks for help to deal with arrears in their communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. One issue that has come up in the Assembly in the past is the need to update the *Nunavut Residential Tenancies Act* and I’m pretty sure that this piece of legislation does fall under the Department of Justice, but I would see the Nunavut Housing Corporation as the specialist or subject matter expert in this area.

For my next question, I would like to ask if there have been any discussions between the Nunavut Housing Corporation and other government departments and agencies with regard to updating the *Residential Tenancies Act*. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, they’ve had preliminary discussions being led by Justice on that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I’ll continue that line of questioning with the Minister of Justice.

For my next question, I would like to ask if the Nunavut Housing Corporation and the local housing authorities and organizations are applicable or whether or not the *Residential Tenancies Act* applies to the NHC and LHOs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Yes, it does, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that confirmation, minister. One of the sections within the *Residential Tenancies Act* is the rental increases and the need to provide a 12-month notice before implementing any rental increases. Can the minister confirm that all public housing rent increases apply with the 12-month notice period? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: I believe so, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) I have no more names on my list. We're here to look at the Nunavut Housing Corporation. Detail of Expenditures, to be Voted. Total Operations and Maintenance, to be Voted. \$269,369,000. Agree?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Do members agree that we have concluded the review of the Nunavut Housing Corporation?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Minister Kusugak, do you have some brief closing comments?

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would really like to thank the Nunavut Housing Corporation Board of Directors. Their active involvement in steering the corporation is leading us to where we are today.

I would like to thank all the staff across Nunavut with the housing corporation, including the local housing organizations and all the housing board of directors. It's not an easy task when you're there in the community, dealing with these very important matters.

Last but not least, Mr. Chairman, I've had tremendous support in this portfolio from all Members in this House and I really appreciate that. I think it's very important that we continue to work together, keep an honest and open conversation, and at any time during or after this sitting, if there is information required, please let me know.

Thank you for the afternoon, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) The minister and officials can leave and if we can have the family services minister go there and members, I urge you to keep in your seats there and we're going on to Family Services.

Bill 37 – Appropriation (Operations & Maintenance) Act, 2024-2025 – Family Services – Consideration in Committee

Chairman: Good afternoon. I would like to call this committee meeting back to order and I would like to ask Minister Nakashuk: do you have any officials that

you would like to appear before the committee? Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk: Yes.

Chairman: Does the committee agree to let the minister's officials appear before you?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses in.

For the record, Minister Nakashuk, please introduce your officials and then proceed with your opening comments. Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk

(interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right is my Deputy Minister, Jonathan Ellsworth, and to my left is (interpretation ends) Director of Corporate Services, Dwayton Tonge.

(interpretation) I am pleased to be here today to present and discuss the proposed 2024-25 main estimates and business plan for the Department of Family Services.

Mr. Chairman, the department provides a range of programs and services that promote the well-being and self-reliance of Nunavummiut. It prepares individuals for meaningful work through employment readiness programming and supports through a variety of services provided across four client-focused divisions.

1. (interpretation ends) The Family Wellness Division provides a broad range of support services for children, families, and vulnerable

adults who may require protection or other specialized support. The division also provides emergency intervention as well as prevention programs.

2. The Income Assistance Division includes a variety of benefit programs that provide financial assistance to people 18 years of age and over and their dependants.
3. The Career Development Division promotes employment training programs, administers funding to clients for these programs, and offers career counselling services.
4. The Poverty Reduction Division coordinates collaboration across government departments and with Inuit organizations on strategic approaches to poverty reduction, food insecurity, and homelessness.

Mr. Chairman, for 2024-25, to support the ongoing programs and services provided, the Department of Family Services is proposing an operating budget of \$195 million, which represents an increase of 10 percent, or \$15.60 million, over last year's main estimates. These budget increases reflect the changes the department has undertaken to support vulnerable Nunavummiut who cannot meet their basic needs as they work toward personal well-being. These increases include:

- \$3,295,000 in new funding for critical family wellness positions across the territory. Staffing capacity is a root cause of the problems highlighted in the report tabled by the Office of the Auditor General last year. This will help address the crisis

described in that report by enabling the department to address the specific concerns regarding inadequate service levels and compliance across the territory. More adequate staffing means a shift from crisis intervention to a more preventative approach type of work for the department's Family Wellness Division.

- \$7.5 million for residential care services.
- \$4,145,000 for increased funding for food security strengthening supports and homeless shelters.
- \$655,000 for increases in Corporate Management, Income Assistance, and Career Development.

Mr. Chairman, this proposed operating budget will also allow the department to support the government's efforts to address the *Katujjiluta* mandate's commitments.

I would be happy to respond to questions from the standing committee members on the proposed 2024-25 main estimates and business plan of the Department of Family Services. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, minister. We have a problem here right now. We're going to have to take a break. We have the openers from the minister's other department that the minister is responsible for, the Department of Human Resources, so we will take a break until we have the minister's opening comments for Family Services.

>> *Committee recessed at 16:08 and resumed at 16:15*

Chairman: Good afternoon. I would like to call the committee meeting back to order. We have the proper documents in front of us now. Does the chair of the standing committee have opening comments? Ms. Brewster, please proceed.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hope everybody has had the opportunity to review the minister's opening remarks.

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Wellness have reviewed the 2024-25 main estimates and business plan of the Department of Family Services.

Mr. Chairman, the operations and maintenance budget for the Department of Family Services is projected to be \$195 million for 2024-25, an increase of \$15.6 million from 2023-24.

The standing committee notes that the department is proposing to increase funding for its Family Wellness Division to enhance its staffing capacity and improve service delivery and compliance in areas that were identified by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada in the 2023 Report on Child and Family Services in Nunavut. Members anticipate that the department's comprehensive strategic plan to address the concerns raised by the Auditor General will include details on specific initiatives and establish clear objectives. There is an expectation that regular updates on the status of the strategic plan will be provided to members, with key

performance indicators to monitor and track its progress.

The Department of Family Services provides a wide range of critical services to Nunavummiut who may be vulnerable and who may require additional protections or supports to live safely and comfortably. The standing committee notes that the department's proposed budget for residential care services is projected to increase in 2024-25. Members will be interested to learn what specific residential programs will be delivered by departmental staff and what programs will be delivered through contracted services.

The standing committee continues to support the department's ongoing contributions to community-based initiatives. The committee encourage communities and local groups to reach out to Family Services to explore opportunities for opening and operating shelters, including shelter services for youth. Community initiatives to establish and run food centres, soup kitchens, and other projects to address issues relating to poverty and food insecurity could also be supported with directed funding. The committee strongly encourages departmental officials to work with their counterparts in the departments of Education and Health to establish a standardized meal program for all Nunavut schools as far too many young students face issues of food insecurity which impacts their ability to learn and advance in their education.

Mr. Chairman, social workers play an important role in addressing many pressing and critical needs at the community level. The standing

committee supports the department in its efforts to work with Nunavut Arctic College to recruit more Nunavummiut to attend and complete the Nunavut-based social work certification and degree programs.

Committee members would like to express their appreciation for community organizations which provide support and assistance to vulnerable individuals, especially in those communities where there have been no social workers for extended periods of time. The committee encourages the department to foster and maintain these relationships, while working to staff positions on a permanent basis.

During the minister's appearance before the committee to address her department's draft budget and business plan, members were given to understand that significant efforts have been made, in collaboration with such entities as the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth, to develop new standards and procedures for community social services work that will be more effective and culturally appropriate than what is currently in place.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Family Services delivers a number of programs and resources to assist adults in accessing education and training opportunities and gain employment. It has managed the Nunavut Apprenticeship program since 2013. The committee was happy to learn that the department has engaged with the Nunavut Housing Corporation to develop opportunities for community-based 'training-on-the-job' options. Members further encourage the department to explore options to deliver

pre-apprenticeship programming in those community high schools where needs have been identified and there is available space and personnel.

On a final note, the standing committee recognizes that income assistance benefits were increased significantly in 2023. Members encourage the department to continue to monitor the rising cost of living and how it impacts Nunavummiut and look forward to receiving further information with respect to the possibility of establishing a guaranteed basic income across the territory.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my opening remarks. I anticipate that individual members will also have questions and comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Do members have any general comments before we proceed to the detailed questions? I have no names for general comments. We will now proceed to the page-by-page review of the main estimates, starting on page L-4, and there are five branches. The first branch is Corporate Management. L-4. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I don't want to start off on a negative note. Good afternoon, minister and your officials. It's nice to see you again in the Chamber.

It's no secret that the Department of Family Services is in the same boat as the other departments facing very serious staffing issues. Can the minister provide an update today on the

department's current staffing level?
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for that question. The staffing level at the Department of Family Services is currently at 67 percent in total. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. When the minister was before the standing committee, I did note that there were no job competitions posted for the Department of Family Services. I looked at the Department of HR's website this morning and do note that there is one job currently being advertised for the regional manager of income assistance. Can the minister update us today on how many job competitions are currently in the process to be advertised? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for that question. There are currently 23 positions that are open that we are now working on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, minister. Twenty-three job competitions in the works and being processed. Given a very real situation facing children and families and the role the department plays in providing assistance and protection, the fact that there is only one current job posting is a bit of a concern. I'm glad that there are 23 job postings in the works and being processed, but how many competitions have been advertised so far this year? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not sure how many positions have been advertised. As the competitions change from time to time, it's hard to tell how many positions have been advertised to date. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Like I said, as the department plays such a crucial role in providing safety for our most vulnerable, I would like to ask the minister to commit to looking into that and ask that the minister return to the committee with a figure of how many competitions have been advertised so far this year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for that

question. (interpretation ends) I think every department is facing this right now. If I asked the Department of Education how many job ads they have done, how can they go backdate and provide that kind of number? How far are you trying to get into in terms of how many job ads have been posted by the Department of Family Services? I don't think that's a very valid question. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, and I must apologize to the minister. The discussions that we're going to have are going to be very difficult. After all that we have gone through so far this year with the OAG reports and finally seeing statistics with the rates of child sexual abuse in the annual report provided by the Department of Family Services, it really sheds light on the very serious nature that our children and youth and vulnerable populations are currently going through.

I'm sorry if I come across negatively throughout these deliberations, but again, this is a very serious matter, a very critical issue. There are children being, sorry to even say this, but I'll say it the best way I can, sexually abused constantly across all our communities. Here is an annual report indicating that 500 children in South Baffin have been sexually abused in one year. That is horrifying.

When it comes to filling positions, such as social workers, and fulfilling the obligations of the *Family Services Act*, I

think asking how many positions have been advertised is a legitimate question. I would like to be assured that these vacant positions are more important than the one position that's being advertised.

Again, I would like to ask the minister if she would commit to providing the committee with information on how many positions have been advertised so far this year. I find it alarming that there is only one job advertised currently. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for that clarification. If I can add to my response, a little over a year ago, we faced a critical shortage of social workers and introduced ads outside of Nunavut asking for qualified applicants to apply. There were approximately 200 candidates who applied for these social worker positions. That is what I recall and these are managed via contracts for workers coming from outside of Nunavut. I am talking about this practice we undertook towards this challenge.

At the beginning of the calendar year, if that is what you are asking about, we can look into the data as it seems we are not supporting others, as we already know how difficult and strenuous social work entails within Nunavut. We are looking for more workers, but currently the way the member portrayed it, that there was only a single position advertised, that was not the case with the Department of Family Services. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: I don't know where to go with that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for notifying us that there had been 200 applicants from outside of the territory and some contractors as well. That is very good, that is very reassuring, but according to the Department of HR's website, there is only one position being advertised currently. I'm getting a bit heated, so I'm going to have to leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Next name on my list is Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, minister and your officials.

I believe the department provides, with regard to the elder care strategy, elders' assistance. I believe the department provides programs such as the senior supplementary benefits and the Senior Fuel Subsidy Program. Currently what other programs does the department help with assisting elders in Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for that question. Now, when this government began operating, the debate was on ways to increase the programs and services to provide additional assistance to our elders, especially with our department's programs for social assistance and food allowances for elders. This has progressed quite well.

The program you referenced, the (interpretation ends) elders' access to country food (interpretation) program, is one and the (interpretation ends) seniors' burial support (interpretation) is another. As well, we have the (interpretation ends) Senior Fuel Subsidy (interpretation) that you mentioned. These comprise part of our efforts to provide more support for elders, especially if they are homeowners.

Through the Department of Family Services, we can also provide funding assistance. I cannot recall the other programs currently, as I lost my train of thought. I would ask that my deputy minister provide additional details if I forgot any of the elder-specific programming.

I want to return to this program, (interpretation ends) elders' access to country food, (interpretation) as there are several other departments that also assist in this, such as the Department of Economic Development and Transportation. We have collaborated with them, especially in deliberating on improvements to providing more country food within Nunavut. We also had senior staff tour the regions to consult the elders on ways to improve the means to assist them. This would be related to country food, whether it goes through the hunters and trappers organizations and the conservation officers, to provide more access to country food for our elders.

These are just some of the programs and services that we provide. If I forgot any of them, my deputy minister is available to provide more details, if it is okay with the committee, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the minister adequately summed up the programs being delivered by the Department of Family Services respecting elders. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hope I caught everything with interpretation. For the comprehensive elders and senior care strategy, I am wondering if the minister can explain how her Department of Family Services participated in developing the elder and senior care strategy that should be tabled pretty soon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for the question about the strategy that was being worked on. All the things that need to be done have been divided amongst the departments. I already explained some of the ones that the Department of Family Services has taken on. We need to do more work on some of them and there are others that didn't run quite well. We're trying to see what we can do about them. We're not dealing with this on our own. The other government departments are also involved. We try to work with them to make progress on programs and services to support elders. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize if I missed something in the interpretation, but I'm wondering how the department contributes to this strategy that's being put together now, if I can get better explanation. I'm sorry if I missed something in the interpretation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for that follow-up question. If it's okay with you, I would like my deputy minister to explain that, (interpretation ends) Deputy Minister Ellsworth. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that question. Of course, those around the table know that the Government of Nunavut is committed to supporting elders and ensuring they have access to adequate resources, programming, and country food.

If I understand the question correctly, how did the Department of Family Services contribute, we met regularly through our officials at the policy and divisional levels with regard to the potential opportunities that the department could contribute to the elder strategy.

Some of those commitments include providing funding for community level hunting and food distribution programs; to promote availability of country food; supporting the delivery of country food to elders; continuing to distribute food vouchers for stores and other entities; investing in hunters and local food systems in every community, including salaried hunters and processing infrastructure; and investing in local country food stores run by hunters so that country food is accessible to elders and everyone in the community. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the responses. My next question is regarding staffing struggles. When an employee leaves the department, are exit interviews done in every case and, if not, why not? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for asking that question. (interpretation ends) I could understand your question in terms of our social workers travelling in and out of the communities, with the high number of casuals going in and out, and/or if there is no permanent indeterminate social worker in the community, why they're leaving quicker.

In terms of exit surveys, that's more of a Department of Human Resources question because it applies to all GN

employees. That information, I could ask more specifically if the department provides data or collects data in terms of exit surveys for our employees within the department, but I don't think we do have that within the department. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's a bit surprising, actually, with the high turnover rate of social workers, especially if you don't know why they are leaving or choosing not to come back. If you can't figure out what the root cause is as to why they are not coming back, then it's going to be a never-ending revolving door of people coming in and out and once again starting over with trying to figure out each file case and the family members going through the assistance of social services are having to relive everything that's going on.

I'm wondering: would the minister commit to directing her Department of Family Services to start doing exit surveys, whether they are casuals or term or indeterminate, if they're willing to come back or not, if it's not the specific community, to at least another community in Nunavut? Would the minister commit to that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you, Minister Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for pointing that out. (interpretation ends) Just to go

back to the question a bit, when we're talking about a social worker in a community, the issues that we have is there is usually just one social worker in a community, so we see a lot of burnout from one social worker being located in one community and the isolation being another one and lack of support in the community at times is an issue for a lot of our staff.

When I read the opening statement, this is one of the priorities we have, is to ensure that we get more than one social worker in a community. We will be discussing that further as we go, but this is really our priority within our strategic framework to ensure that we get more employees located in the communities so that we have less staff burnout within the communities.

In terms of exit surveys, we do understand that a lot of our staff do report to their director in terms of why they are leaving, but a lot of the issues that we do have when it comes to social workers is because they have burnout, the long overtime they also have, as well as covering for another community. If there is no social worker in another community, we have to ensure that our staff travel to the communities as well to provide as much support as they can to another community as well. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Next name on my list is Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: I'll pass for now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: I have no more names on my list for L-4. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know it sounds a bit unusual, but given the gravity of the materials that we are discussing, it's not just heavy on us; it's heavy on people watching, but most importantly, it's heavy on the minister and your officials because you deal with this every day.

With the way that discussions started off, I don't think it will get any more productive and I would suggest that we all take a moment to cool off and come back with clear minds, and I would like to report progress. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) We have a motion on the floor. It's non-debatable. All in favour of the motion. All opposed. Abstaining. Motion is carried. The officials may leave the witness table and I will now rise to report progress.

Speaker: Item 20. Report of the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Hickes.

Item 20: Report of the Committee of the Whole

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been reviewing Bill 37 and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be agreed to. Thank you.

Speaker: There is a motion on the floor. Is there a seconder? Mr. Simailak. The motion is in order. To the motion.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: 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 March 7:

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
 - Bill 37

- Bill 38
- Bill 39
- Bill 40

20. Report of the Committee of the
Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

22. Orders of the Day

Thank you.

>>Applause

Speaker: In accordance to the authority provided to me by Motion 29 – 6(2), this House stands adjourned until Thursday, March 7, at 10 a.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>House adjourned at 16:48

