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Megan Leslie, Director of Family Wellness,
Statutory and Strategic Initiatives,
Department of Family Services

Megan Hunt, Deputy Minister, Department of
Health

Victoria Madsen, Assistant Deputy Minister,
Inuusivut

Rebecca Hainnu, Deputy Minister, Department
of Education

Shannon Spendlove-Robidas, Director of
Student Achievement, Department of
Education

Christine Ellsworth, Deputy Minister,
Department of Justice

Andrew Blackadar, Assistant Deputy Minister,
Public Safety, Department of Justice

>>Committee commenced at 13:31.

Chairman (Mr. Pedersen): Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's televised hearing on the Standing Committee on Oversight and Government Operations and Public Accounts. Today we'll be going over the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 Annual Reports for the Representative of Children and Youth. Before we begin, I would ask the member for Aggu to say the opening prayer.

>>Prayer.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Attagutaluk. So today I'll be making an opening statement, followed by an opening statement on the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth. And then following that, opening statements from the Government of Nunavut departments, and I'll call your department when you're up. Thank you. And then we'll get into questions from the members to the witnesses about the government and the office of the representative.

Good day.

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I am pleased to begin by welcoming everyone to this meeting of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts.

We have convened today on the occasion of the standing committee's televised hearing on the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 annual reports of the Representative for Children and Youth.

I will first introduce my standing committee colleagues:

- Edward Attagutalak, Co-Chair of the standing committee and Member for Aggu;
- Hannah Angootealuk, Member for Aivilik;
- Jamie Kablutsiak, Member for Arviat South;
- Gordon Kautuk, Member for Uqqummiut;
- Simon Kuliktana, Member for Kugluktuk;
- Johnny Mike, Member for Pangnirtung;
- David Porter, Member for Gjoa Haven;
- Abraham Qammaniq, Member for Amittuq; and
- Steven Taqtu, Member for Quttiktuq.

Nunavut's Representative for Children and Youth is appointed on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. Ms. Bates was first appointed in June of 2019 and was reappointed on May 23, 2024, for another five-year term which will expire in July of 2029.

As an independent officer of the House, the Representative for Children and Youth is required by law to prepare and submit an annual report to the Legislative Assembly.

The 2023-2024 annual report of the Representative for Children and Youth was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on October 24, 2024. Televised standing committee hearings on this annual report were held from April 19-20, 2024. The standing committee subsequently presented its report to the House on May 28, 2025. The Representative for

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Children and Youth's response to the report of the standing committee was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on September 8, 2025. The Government of Nunavut's response to the report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on September 15, 2025.

The Representative for Children and Youth's 2024-2025 annual report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on September 16, 2025. The Representative for Children and Youth's 2025-2026 annual report was backdoor tabled on September 11, 2026, and will be formally tabled in the Legislative Assembly during its upcoming fall sitting.

This week's televised hearing provides an opportunity for the Representative for Children and Youth's 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 annual reports to be discussed in a public forum.

I anticipate that a number of themes will be addressed during this televised hearing, including:

- The status of the Government of Nunavut’s formal responses to the recommendations that were contained in the standing committee’s reports on its review of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth’s recent annual reports;
- Activities and initiatives undertaken by the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth during the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 fiscal years, including activities related to individual and systemic advocacy;
- The issue of child sexual abuse and the work of the Nunavut Child Abuse and Neglect Agreement Committee;
- Reviews of critical injuries and deaths; and
- Recommendations for amendments to legislation.

Officials from a number of Government of Nunavut department are also appearing at this

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televised hearing and I will shortly be inviting the witnesses to make their opening remarks to the standing committee.

I would like to conclude by addressing some housekeeping matters. I ask all Members and witnesses to ensure that their cell phones and other electronic devices do not disrupt these proceedings. In order to assist our interpreters and technical staff, I ask that all Members and witnesses go through the Chair before speaking. I'll note also, please do not touch the microphone buttons on the screen in front of you, they will be put on for you automatically for you when you're going to be speaking. Thank you. I also ask that all Members and witnesses refrain from the excessive use of acronyms during these proceedings.

Members of the standing committee have been provided with a number of documents for their ease of reference during this televised hearing.

For the benefit of our witnesses and interpreters, I ask Members to be precise when quoting from, or making reference to, specific documents.

This hearing is being televised live across Nunavut on community cable stations and the direct-to-home satellite services of both the Bell and Shaw networks. It is also being live-streamed on the Legislative Assembly's website. Transcripts of the televised hearing will be posted on the Legislative Assembly's website at a later date.

Under Rule 91(5) of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut*, the government is required to table a formal written response to reports of standing committees within 120 days of their presentation, and I anticipate that we will be presenting our report on this televised hearing at an upcoming sitting of the House.

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Before I continue, I want to acknowledge that I could not appear before you today and speak confidently, based on evidence, about what children, youth, and families are experiencing without the staff at the Representative for Children and Youth Office.

Their work requires independence, objectivity and careful analysis while exposing them, in a concentrated way, to circumstances involving serious harm, unmet needs, missed opportunities to intervene and, at times, profound loss.

I recognize their contribution and thank them for the commitment, care, integrity, and the professionalism they bring to this difficult work every day.

I would also like to thank the young people, parents, foster parents, front-line service providers, and those working in services outside our office's mandate who have reached out, shared their experiences, and asked for our support. I am deeply grateful for the trust you place in our Office, and I will do my best to represent your concerns and voices here today.

It has been nearly a year and a half since I last appeared here, and, as the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 annual reports before you highlight, we have been busy.

Unfortunately, being busy is not a good thing for my office, as our work stems from issues brought to our attention and those we identify through our individual and systemic advocacy programs.

As a complaints-based organization, we do not select specific departments for scrutiny; rather, we go wherever we're asked, and the overwhelming majority of that work comes directly from the serious, recurring issues young Nunavummiut endure in the child-

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them across our programs, and track them over time. We identified 28 systemic issues through our casework, reviews, community engagement, monitoring, and other oversight activities.

We now report how each systemic issue came to the office's attention, its relevant history (including previous recommendations), actions taken by the responsible department, and the work our office undertook during the reporting period.

In both the Annual Reports, every systemic advocacy recommendation that remained outstanding at the end of each fiscal year was directed to the Department of Family Services and related to child welfare.

I am not here to suggest that there are no issues involving the Departments of Health, Justice, and Education. There are, and they are reported to our Office. The difference is how they respond.

Independent oversight requires the ability to obtain reliable information, independently examine issues, and determine whether those issues have been adequately addressed. It also requires the department being reviewed to be open to that scrutiny and to engage with the oversight process, which is what the Departments of Health, Justice, and Education consistently do.

Our experience with the Department of Family Services, as it relates to child welfare, has raised significant concerns about their openness to independent oversight. Our Office's concerns are too often met with defensive or incomplete responses, and at times, no response at all. The information provided to us is frequently inaccurate, incomplete or inconsistent with other information available to us, and some issues are not substantively addressed.

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The Department has also taken the position that, when making decisions affecting children, youth and families, it determines when or whether the Representative for Children and Youth Office can be involved.

Based on our Office's work and experience, I am here today to tell you that the child-welfare system described in public reporting is very different from the system we encounter in practice. The system we encounter is closed, institutionally controlled, authority-based, and it operates without sufficient transparency and accountability.

Our experience must also be considered in the context of a much longer history of independent findings concerning child welfare. The Office of the Auditor General, the Standing Committee of the Sixth Legislative Assembly, and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Nunavut have all made recommendations to the Department, some dating back to 2011.

When the Office of the Auditor General returned in 2023 and independently examined the Department's progress, it found that many of the same serious deficiencies remained and that some actions previously reported as completed had not, in fact, been completed. The number of times these issues have been reported, and how long they have persisted, is itself evidence that the current approach to monitoring implementation and ensuring accountability is inadequate.

What is required is ongoing independent scrutiny and, more importantly, follow-up, including regular public appearances before the Legislative Assembly, where the Department must account for its commitments, demonstrate that its reported actions have occurred, and show, with measurable outcomes, whether those actions have addressed the underlying issues.

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Given the seriousness and long-term implications of these issues for children and families, this accountability gap should not be viewed only as a child-welfare issue. Do not underestimate the impact of addressing the longstanding issues within the child-welfare system. If we improve how we protect children, support families and respond to childhood adversity, we strengthen the foundation for better outcomes in mental health, education, justice and suicide prevention.

I am not here today to sound the alarm; it has already been sounded. Repeatedly. Over many years.

Governments, Legislative Assemblies and departmental leadership change. Through those transitions, commitments have gone unfulfilled, accountability has been interrupted, and longstanding issues have remained unresolved.

You, as the current government and departmental leadership, did not create the child-welfare crisis we face today, but it is now your responsibility to address it. But inheriting longstanding problems cannot mean inheriting the pattern of accepting recommendations, reporting progress and then allowing the same issues to persist. At some point, someone must take responsibility for ensuring that what has been identified is actually addressed.

Our Office can advocate for and support children, youth and their families when they are involved with government services. We can provide you with information and independent findings, make recommendations, and track whether those recommendations have been implemented. We cannot compel action or change. You have that power.

On behalf of the children, youth and families of this Territory, I am asking you to do what

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successive governments have not: take decisive action. Establish the strong, regular and public accountability necessary to address these longstanding issues and bring an end to Nunavut's child-welfare crisis.

Do not allow history to repeat itself. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates, for your Opening Comments. I'll now call upon Ms. Fowler with the department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs to have opening remarks on behalf of that department. Go ahead Ms. Fowler.

Ms. Fowler: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 Annual Reports of the Representative for Children and Youth.

I further want to express my thanks to my Deputy Minister colleagues for their leadership addressing the concerns raised by the Representative for Children and Youth. They are dedicated to serving Nunavummiut by strengthening and uplifting families and communities.

Mr. Chairman, the Representative for Children and Youth's 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 annual reports provide updates on a 2023-2024 recommendation for Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs: that report recommended "that the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs as the lead, works to ensure current, complete, and accurate statistics are available through the Nunavut Bureau of Statistics."

I'm pleased to tell you that since hiring a Director of Nunavummit Kiglisiniartiit, significant progress has been made:

- We are ensuring accurate and up-to-date statistics are available on the

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I look forward to answering any questions members may have.

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Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Fowler. I'll now move on to Mr. Ellsworth for the Department of Family Services. Go ahead, Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Good day, Mr. Chair, members of the Standing Committee, officials from the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth, and colleagues.

My name is Jonathan Ellsworth, Deputy Minister of the Department of Family Services. I am pleased to appear before you with members of our Family Wellness leadership team to discuss the Representative for Children and Youth's 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 Annual Reports, the concerns raised through that work, and the actions the Department is taking in response.

The safety, dignity, rights and well-being of children, youth and families remain at the centre of our work.

We recognize that improving outcomes for children, youth and families requires more than policies, standards and systems. They are, however, the foundation upon which we build better outcomes, and I thank my team for completing much of this important work.

Today, I will describe how the Department is moving from building new foundations to demonstrating measurable improvement.

From Standards to Consistent Practice

At the last hearing, we committed to reviewing and updating our Standards of Practice to improve consistency, accountability, service quality, and alignment with legislation and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

To date, 64 Standards of Practice have been developed and implemented across the child

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and family services continuum. The standards set out practice expectations, procedures, legal and cultural considerations, documentation requirements and links to our Matrix Integrated Case Management System. They include areas where formal guidance did not previously exist, including the rights of children and youth in care, kinship care, quality-of-care reviews and specialized out-of-territory services.

We do not consider the work complete because a standard has been issued. A standard improves a child's experience only when staff understand it, supervisors monitor it, managers respond when practice falls short, and leadership has reliable information to determine whether it is working.

This is why training, supervision and mentorship are now a standard part of the Department's social work practice.

Our Quality Assurance team's review and follow-ups are now being used to identify practice gaps, shape training, and support staff through mentorship and job-shadowing. Quality Assurance processes are also a critical part of supporting the data quality.

Quality Assurance, Data and Accountability

During 2025-2026, the Department completed a territory-wide Quality Assurance File Audit involving 1,438 child protection files across all regions. This was the first structured, department-led review of child protection files since the *Child and Family Services Act* came into force. It established a territory-wide baseline and identified examples of responsive, trauma-informed practice, as well as significant gaps in documentation, consistency and case management. Matters requiring attention were addressed immediately during the audit.

We are moving from single-purpose audits to an ongoing Quality Assurance Program with

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standardized compliance indicators and regular reporting. Most importantly, the program provides a process to quickly identify concerns and gaps, and direct corrective action. This is an important shift from identifying problems after the fact to monitoring practice continuously.

The Department is strengthening Matrix. Our system now tracks referrals, investigations, ongoing services, placements, adoption and critical incidents. Training continues through onboarding and the Nunavut Child Protection Worker training framework, and data-quality and validation processes are improving data reliability.

Mr. Chair, reliable information is essential to protecting children, identifying service gaps, monitoring outcomes and demonstrating progress. Where figures have historically been inconsistent, our responsibility is to reconcile them and establish one reliable source of information for operational decisions, oversight and public reporting.

Community Services and Workforce

Mr. Chair, the quality of a standard means little if a family cannot reach the service when it is needed. The Department agreed with the Representative's recommendations concerning interruptions in community services. We implemented a Service Interruption Standard, detailing coverages and notifications required before an office closure or service restriction, that ensures child protection services aren't interrupted.

The territory-wide file audit provided a broader, deeper assessment of service quality and compliance across communities.

Recruitment and retention remain among our most significant operational risks. As of June 30, 2026, 39 of 67 funded Community Social

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and identity when children cannot safely remain with their caregivers. As of April 2026, there were 159 foster homes across Nunavut, including 84 regular foster homes and 75 extended-family or kinship homes.

All foster-home files were reviewed against standards by March 31, 2026. Targeted remediation and monitoring are continuing. As of June 30, 2026, Vulnerable Sector Check compliance has increased to more than 91 per cent, and home-study completion is at 96 per cent. We are working on improving how regularly we conduct annual foster home reviews.

To better support our caregivers, the Department increased daily foster care rates by 45 per cent, retroactive to April 1, 2026. This rate increase provides strong financial support for day-to-day care, including food, clothing, housing, school supplies and extracurricular activities.

The Department is also developing a Foster Caregiver and Kinship Support Network, updating guidance and training, reviewing financial and respite supports, and working to strengthen recruitment and retention of caregivers and Foster Care Coordinators.

As of March 31, 2026, 118 children and youth were placed out-of-territory receiving specialized services that are only delivered outside Nunavut.

The Department is strengthening oversight of providers and placements – comprehensive reviews are underway, and every child and youth placed outside Nunavut has a Cultural Support Plan. Client Liaison Officers located in communities where children and youth are placed support cultural connection through language and access to country food, for example. They also assist with family

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engagement, as well as planning and logistics for returning home, wherever possible.

Critical Incidents, Child Abuse and Shared Responsibility

Mr. Chair, the Representative's reports identify continuing concerns relating to suicide, suicidal ideation, child sexual abuse and child welfare. These are deeply serious issues that the Department takes seriously. Behind every number is a young person, a family and a community.

The Department has added critical-incident reporting to Matrix. We are also strengthening definitions, documentation and review processes so incidents can be consistently recorded, assessed and used to identify patterns and improve practice.

The updated Surusinit Ikajuqtigiit Nunavut Child Abuse and Neglect Response Agreement was completed in June 2026. It establishes a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to detecting, reporting, investigating and responding to child abuse and neglect, with culturally and trauma-informed supports for children and families. Work is also continuing across Family Services, Health, Education and Justice on the government-wide Child Sexual Abuse Action Plan and on mandatory-reporting training.

Privacy, Legislative Alignment and Governance

The Department recognizes that effective child protection requires clear authority for information access and decision-making. We are acting on concerns identified by the Information and Privacy Commissioner about the alignment of *Child and Family Services Act* confidentiality provisions with departmental reporting structures. This includes reviewing roles, authorities and access permissions,

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Such differences are normal in child welfare practice, where decisions rest on professional judgment, individual assessment of a child's circumstances, and the exercise of statutory authority in the child's best interests. Those differences do not diminish our respect for the Representative's mandate or our obligation to engage constructively, transparently and in good faith.

The Government of Nunavut and Representative for Children and Youth Office Protocol and Standard 117 provide important frameworks for communication, participation, information sharing and issue resolution. The Department supports meaningful Representative for Children and Youth Office participation and independent oversight while recognizing that statutory and operational decisions remain with the officials to whom those responsibilities are assigned by law.

Progress Through the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan

The Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan remains the Department's five-year roadmap for strengthening prevention, improving child-welfare outcomes and building accountability. As of the end of March 2026, 28 of its 80 actions were completed, 48 were in progress and four had not yet begun.

We have completed the Family Wellness organizational realignment and territory-wide file audit. We have established frameworks and have staffed Quality Assurance and Client Relations functions. We have modernized Standards of Practice and we have improved Matrix. We have also strengthened foster-care oversight, out-of-territory monitoring, training and mentorship, and we have expanded prevention and community-support work.

Mr. Chair, we are now preparing the next phase of strategic planning. In 2026-2027, we will be

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building on the Ilagiitsiarniq foundation using lessons learned through implementation evidence and evaluation, and advice from the Auditor General and standing committee. We will align a revised plan with the priorities of the Seventh Legislative Assembly, with renewed engagement with Inuit organizations and GN partners.

Our objective is to move beyond counting completed actions and demonstrate what those actions mean in practice: more consistent services, stronger oversight, better information, and greater continuity of care. Achieving targets in these areas will result in stronger connections to family and culture, and better outcomes for children, youth and families.

Looking Forward

Mr. Chair, the concerns identified by the Representative are interconnected. Staffing affects service continuity. Service continuity affects case planning and documentation. Reliable data affects oversight and decision-making. Placement stability, permanency, privacy, critical-incident reporting and interdepartmental coordination all affect the experience of children and families.

The work I have described here today is all part of that response.

Our focus now is straightforward: demonstrate that standards are being followed; improve the reliability of our information; strengthen community service coverage and workforce supports; improve permanency and placement oversight; ensure critical incidents are consistently reported and reviewed; strengthen information governance; and most importantly, listen to children, youth, families, communities, Elders, Inuit organizations and service providers.

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We are not suggesting that every concern has been resolved. Significant work remains. We will measure progress not by the number of policies we produce, but by whether practice becomes more consistent, accountability becomes more visible, and children, youth and families experience better services.

Qujannamiik.

Thank you, Chair and Members of the Committee. We welcome your questions and the opportunity to discuss this work further. Where we are not able to provide the Committee with complete or verified information today, we will follow up in writing rather than speculate.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. We will now move to opening remarks from the Department of Health. Ms. Hunt you have the floor. Go ahead.

Ms. Hunt: *Qujannamiik*. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members.

I am pleased to appear today before the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Affairs. I am Megan Hunt, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Health and I am here with Victoria Madsen, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Inuusivut, Mental Health and Addictions.

I would like to start by thanking the Standing Committee for the opportunity to speak to the Representative for Children and Youth's 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 Annual Reports.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Representative for Children and Youth and staff for the important work they do to uphold the rights of Nunavummiut.

I'd like to acknowledge the Deputy Ministers and organizations and thank them and their

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accessible for Nunavummiut and establish a more comprehensive picture of the status of children and youth in Nunavut.

I'd like to take this opportunity to update the Standing Committee on our mental health surveillance system, which increases the accessibility, consistency, and reliability of data on self-harm and suicide attempts. This work is done through the collection of data from the Coroner's Office, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police records, and personal health charts. Several variables are collected, such as demographics, suicide circumstances, precipitating events and life history, as well as mental health history. We look forward to sharing more information regarding this process, and our plans to collect additional variables in the future, including information related to food security, family history with residential school and levels of engagement in work and school.

Consistently, the annual reports of the Representative for Children and Youth identify the importance of preventative dental care aimed at children, youth and families. As was noted in the 2023-2024 Annual Report, for the past five years, dental caries — in other words, tooth decay — has been the most common reason for medical travel for children 10 years of age and younger. To that end, we are continuing to offer preventative services in communities while working to increase access to oral health services in-territory.

The Children's Oral Health Program provides free preventative and clinical dental care for children up to the age of 12. Last fiscal year roughly 2500 children were screened under the Oral Health Project. The Department also piloted a toothbrushing project in Arctic Bay in September 2025. The project provided students the chance to practice daily, supervised toothbrushing routines, intended to build and strengthen oral health habits. We are resuming

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that program in Arctic Bay again this Fall, and expanding it to Gjoa Haven, Nauyasat and Iqaluit.

I am also pleased to report Health recently applied for and secured funding under Health Canada's Oral Health Access Fund. Funding supported the recent installation of a new panoramic x-ray machine at Qikiqtani General Hospital, allowing the local handling of specialized orthodontics and complex oral surgeries in Iqaluit, which will improve diagnostics and reduce the need for medical travel.

I would also like to touch upon pediatric access, which has grown over the last several years. The program, like others, has leveraged hybrid methods, including virtual care, to ensure communities have timely access to a pediatrician. All communities have been assigned a consistent pediatrician who provides care through in-person visits and virtual assessments. The Qikiqtani General Hospital has six pediatricians that provide services to the Qikiqtaaluk communities. The Kivalliq and Kitikmeot regions are supported with pediatricians from Ongomiizwin Health Services out of Winnipeg and Stanton Hospital in Yellowknife.

Lastly, I would like to update the Standing Committee with recent efforts to establish Integrated Youth Services and our recent engagement with youth across the territory. The Department of Health is working with Health Canada to establish integrated youth service hubs. As part of this, in January 2026 Health engaged with youth, community leadership and service partners in Kinngait, to identify mental health priorities to help inform the planning stages of this work. We look forward to sharing further updates as this work progresses.

I am pleased to report that the Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy Partners held the first

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regional youth summit in Resolute Bay in May 2026 to promote knowledge sharing related to wellness, suicide prevention, while creating opportunities to strengthen connection with community. The event was dedicated to youth ages 18-30 living in the Qikiqtani region, providing an opportunity for them to share personal experiences, discuss cultural strengths, engage in self-care and foster a collective sense of support and healing. This is the first of two territorial summits and reflects what we continue to hear from community members — the need to have Inuit youth actively involved in suicide prevention efforts.

Mr. Chairman and Members, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to be here alongside the Representative for Children and Youth, the Departments of Family Services, Education, Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, and Justice. We all share a common goal, to ensure the wellbeing of children and youth across the territory, and these opportunities hold us all accountable to that goal.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my opening comments. *Oujannamiik*.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Hunt. We'll now move to the Department of Education and Ms. Hainnu will be making opening remarks. Go ahead, Ms. Hainnu.

Ms. Hainnu: (interpretation) Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank the Standing Committee for inviting the Department of Education to appear today, and for allowing us to answer questions and speak about concerning our work supporting children and youth. I would also like to introduce Shannon Spendlove-Robidas, Director of Student Achievement, who is accompanying me today. Thank you.

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students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. We will continue to work to enhance all of these services to better meet the needs of our students.

Since last year, Mr. Chair, the Department of Education has continued to make progress on a number of key initiatives that support our children and youth, from early years to well beyond grade graduation.

One such achievement is the continued phased roll-out of our new Nunavut curriculum, with kindergarten to grade 3 implemented in all schools this year. A more culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit will provide the best opportunity for our students to stay in school and graduate with a quality bilingual education.

Mr. Chair, last April I spoke about the agreement the Government of Nunavut signed with the federal government to secure funding under the National School Food Program. I am very pleased to report that the funding continues to flow to our District Education Authorities to enhance school food programs in all communities, including small capital improvements in some school kitchens in Nunavut. While our territory continues to struggle with food insecurity, providing consistent nutritious meals for our children will help set them up for success in the classroom and beyond. This is another positive example of interdepartmental collaboration between the Departments of Education, Health, and Transportation Infrastructure Nunavut to support our students in accessing healthy food programming.

Mr. Chair, the Representative has long been a supporter and advocate for early learning and child care in the territory. Since the signing of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, the department has been working to increase child care spaces, support

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child care infrastructure, and make general improvements to the sector as a whole. Since the signing of the agreement, 272 new child care spaces have been created across the territory across Nunavut. In June of last year, as well Mr. Chair, the new *Early Learning and Child Care Act* was passed, and the department is now working to develop the regulations to bring this *Act* into force. The new legislation focuses on Inuit-centered programs; accessibility, affordability; and the safety and well-being of children. We look forward to updating this committee when the new legislation is brought into force.

(no interpretation)

...opening will contribute to increased attendance and school pride in Taloyoak, and will have a positive impact in the whole community.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, while often the focus of our discussions is on younger children, the department has also been working to increase supports for older youth through the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students program. In the past year, we have significantly increased the funding available for Inuit pursuing post-secondary education, and we look forward to increased support as we add wrap-around, non-financial services for post-secondary students.

The Representative's 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 annual reports identify recurring themes and systemic issues that have arisen through their individual work. We appreciate the issues they have raised, and we look forward to continuing our collaborative work as we improve our education system and support our children and youth in as many ways as possible. Together we can do more, find more creative solutions, and create the positive environment our children and youth need and deserve.

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Mr. Chair, Ms. Spendlove-Robidas and I welcome any questions the Committee may have. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Hainnu. We'll now move to the Department of Justice, and Ms. Ellsworth you have the floor.

Ms. Ellsworth: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends)

I am pleased to appear before the Standing Committee today to speak to matters involving the Department of Justice arising from the Representative for Children and Youth's 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 Annual Reports.

Joining me today is Andrew Blackadar,
Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Safety.

The Department of Justice is committed to supporting and protecting children and youth who come into contact with the justice system. We recognize that young people—whether they are victims, witnesses, or young offenders—have distinct needs and vulnerabilities, and our programs and services must be responsive to those needs.

We also value the important role of the Representative for Children and Youth in advocating for children and youth across Nunavut, including those who interact with the justice system.

I would like to begin by highlighting some of the services and supports currently provided by the Department of Justice.

Our Victim Services team supports children and youth who are victims of crime throughout investigations and court proceedings. Victim Services also works closely with the Umingmak Child and Youth Advocacy Centre and its partners to provide coordinated,

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wraparound support in cases involving sexual abuse.

When children and youth are required to testify in court, we work with Victim Services, Community Justice Workers, Court Services, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Crown prosecutors, and other partners to help minimize trauma and support young people throughout the court process. We also make use of available technology and equipment to help protect children and youth when they provide evidence.

For young people who come into conflict with the law, our restorative and therapeutic justice programs provide opportunities to address the underlying causes of criminal behaviour in ways that are community-based and culturally appropriate.

When a young person is remanded or sentenced to custody, the Isumaqsunngittukkuvik Young Offenders Facility provides Inuit cultural programming, physical activity, community services, and educational opportunities to support rehabilitation.

Policing also plays a key role in protecting children and youth. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Special Investigative Team continues to perform a critical function in investigating crimes involving sexual violence against children and youth.

At the community level, our Community Justice staff work with local organizations on crime-prevention initiatives for young people. These initiatives have included school presentations on bullying awareness, online safety, and healthy relationships, as well as culturally and community-based activities such as traditional tool making, tuktu butchering, helping elders with water delivery and snow shovelling, and supporting local sports and recreation.

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Mr. Chair, I would also like to highlight some developments that strengthen our ability to respond specifically to the needs of young people.

Corrections have established a new Community Youth Reintegration Officer position. This territory-wide position provides more specialized, age-appropriate support for the supervision and rehabilitation for young offenders, recognizing that youth have distinct developmental needs.

The Department is also preparing to expand the therapeutic justice program to Pond Inlet. Through Community Justice and its partners, the program will provide cultural and clinical supports to adults and youth offenders in the community.

Finally, in partnership with the Nunavut Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Department has established 15 new policing officer positions through the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. The work of these officers will be guided by locally identified priorities through engagement with community consultative groups, including priorities related to youth crime and community safety.

Mr. Chair, supporting and protecting children and youth requires collaboration across government, communities, families, and service providers. The Department of Justice remains committed to doing its part and to continue to strengthen how we respond to young people who come into contact with the justice system.

I look forward to the Committee's questions and discussion.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Ellsworth. We'll now take a short break to digest the information that we've all heard and we'll resume at 3 o'clock. Thank you.

>>Committee breaks at 14:44 and resumes at 15:00

Chairman: All right, welcome back to the Standing Committee Hearing. Do members have any general comments or general questions regarding the opening statements? Mr. Qammaniq, go ahead.

Mr. Qammaniq: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman (no interpretation) I was a GLO for the past 14 years, so I work in an office with other departments. This is for the Family Services' Opening Comments. I would like to comment here on page 3 on the bottom paragraph concerning the recruitment and retention. As of June 30, 2026, 39 of 67 funded community social worker positions were vacant. I work in an office where we had a social worker. The conditions are so that a social worker comes into town, and being smaller communities, there's usually only one social worker. So they're basically chained to their desk the whole time they're there, and no chance for debriefing when any incidents happened. They just stay there until they're burnt out. That is an observation that I've made. Like that's one of the stemming issues before we get into the details. Like I'd just like to bring that up. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Qammaniq. More a comment, but Mr. Ellsworth, would you like to reply to that? Thank you.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the member for his comment and the recognition of the impact that the work has on our staff and social workers in communities. This is one of the issues that's been identified

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as requiring a response, which is why in 2023-2024 the Department was -- sorry, 2024-2025 the Department was allocated additional funding to enhance its envelope of social workers.

Although I noted that 39 of the positions were vacant, I can report that we have approximately 80 social workers. So the remaining number are staffed either by casual or contract workers. The hope is that we get away from a reality where social workers are independent in community -- there should be two or more -- so that they can also not only have a balanced quality of life to ensure that their service provisions are balanced in wellness, but also to ensure that there are multiple points of access for our services. Work remains to be done on that front, but I do agree that the workload creates burnout and attrition in our staff model. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. Any other general comments or questions? Mr. Taqtu.

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Chair. It's going to go to the Department of Family Services again. In this Opening Comments it says, "updating our standards of practice to improve consistency, accountability, service quality and alignment with legislation and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit."

Can you elaborate more on Inuit
Qaujimajatuqangit, how you guys deal with it,
like anybody that you guys work with?
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Mr. Ellsworth, go ahead.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, sir, for your question. I would advise the committee that we've worked on multiple occasions with our colleagues at Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated through the

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Article 32 Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajiiit Partnership Committee. And so not only in developing the actual strategic plan, but also in developing standards of practice. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. We'll now move into detailed questions that the members have. We're going to be doing it by theme areas. The first theme is the Operations of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth. Members? Mr. Mike, go ahead.

Mr. Mike (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to all the participants from various departments. Welcome each and everyone of you. Remember, please, that we're having this hearing in regards to Children and Youth Representative. First of all, I have a question for the Office of the Representative of Children and Youth. Your Office is (indiscernible) turning to a business plan was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on February 25, 2025. It indicates that your Office has 12 positions. As of today, how many of the positions are filled with 12 indeterminant employees? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. Ms. Bates, go ahead.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank the member for the question. We're just doing a quick calculation of how many people are indeterminant. At this stage as of today we have five indeterminant positions, and the other positions we have two vacant systemic research positions. We have two vacant individual advocacy positions. We have our intake specialist position is staffed by a casual. And we have a manager of Communications and Public Awareness. And of course the Director of Child and Youth Advocacy Services and myself. I don't get included in the 12. Thank you.

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Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Mike, go ahead.

Mr. Mike (interpretation): Thank you. She has answered some of the questions I was going to pose, but later on as we go on, as you have stated, that there are vacant positions. Which of the Office's positions are currently vacant? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. Ms. Bates, go ahead.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank the member for the question. We have four full-time systemic research positions, two of which are vacant, and we're currently in a competition to recruit and hire those positions. We have three individual advocacy positions. Currently two are vacant, also under competition, actively under a competition to recruit and retain. And we have -- and again, the intake specialist position is staffed by a casual position, and we're looking to potentially appoint that position.

But housing, I need to say. One of the biggest barriers for us to be hiring is housing. And I think I talk about that in the message, the 2024-2025 Annual Report in my message. One of the biggest barriers that we've encountered is obviously the assignment of housing to our positions. It's also I found a significant barrier for hiring Inuit staff.

We've had several candidates that have come forward that would have been wonderful to be in our positions, but, unfortunately, the lack of housing prevents us from hiring them, and they often take positions elsewhere. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Mike.

Mr. Mike (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today I will be asking the question to Nunavummiut Inuit. As of today, how many

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Nunavummiut Inuit are employed in your Office? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the question. Currently we have one, and one on leave. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Mike.

Mr. Mike (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your response as well. As you have stated, there is one Nunavummiut Inuit employed or employed in your Office. As of today, how many employees -- or is that individual fluent in Inuktitut? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. Go ahead, Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank the member for the inquiry. Both of our Inuit staff members are fluent in Inuktitut. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Mike, go ahead.

Mr. Mike (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In your Office 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that you lapsed approximately 300 (indiscernible) -- for competition benefits. What accounts for this lapse? And also, which positions which positions need to go under contract? Thank you. Or which needs to be contracted. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to clarify, you're asking about why we lapsed the certain amount of money or the contract services? Sorry, my apologies. I must have misunderstood the question.

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Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates, for letting us know that. Mr. Mike, can you rephrase your question, please?

Mr. Mike (interpretation): I'm not talking about lapse of funding. But my question is, your Office's 2025-2026 Annual Reports indicate that there's been \$350,647 on contract services. What types of services did your Office require? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. Ms. Bates, go ahead.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for the clarification. So what falls under contract services is legal services. We have a legal contract for legal services. In addition to that, we have a case management system. It's called Penolope, and it's a contracted service. And in addition to that, we have translation services as well. We contract that as well. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Mike?

Mr. Mike (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your response as well. The Standing Committee's Report on televised hearing on your 2023-2024 Annual Report recommended that your Office "could seek nominations and appoint Elder advisors to the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth at the earliest opportunity." Your 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that your Office intends to seek guidance from communities about identifying and engaging local Elders. As of today, what's the status of this work?

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. Go ahead, Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the member for the question. In

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the 2025-2026 Annual Report, there's a section specifically dedicated to Elder advisors. And you are quite correct, the recommendation was made for us to seek nominations for Elder advisors. What we did is we undertook a process in order to identify Elders starting with we canvassed, if you will, communities across Nunavut to inquire how hamlets engaged Elders: Did they have an elder advisory committee?

And what we found and what we report in the 2025 was a lot of the hamlets did not have Elder advisors, and they were certainly wanting to create an Elder advisor panel. And that also -- we struggled with then identifying Elders in each community because we didn't -- often what was going to happen -- often what we found is when we were out doing community visits or individual advocacy work inside communities, that is how we would identify an Elder.

And so we were in Baker Lake and I want to say Pond Inlet, and at that time what we did was we would go to the hamlet or we would go to a service provider and talk about who would be identified as an Elder in that particular community. So we haven't moved forward with nominations.

And the secondary part of the reason why is, as I talk about in my message, it has become apparent to me as I worked in the last seven years, we are a review function, and so a lot of our work is reviewing government services' files. And contained in that work is a lot of trauma and a lot of loss and a lot of abuse. And we have had very candid conversations about the effects of second hand trauma and how to have Elders in a part of our work but not cause them harm, because of what we review. And I'm speaking of experience that I've again obtained from watching what's happened for our Inuit workers as they've been reviewing files, seeing what's happening for young

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people, it's been really hard for them and it's caused them a lot of trauma and harm.

So on a go-forward basis, what we've decided to do is, as opposed to doing an Elder Advisors Committee, because I don't feel it's appropriate for us to ask Elders to be reviewing information, which is also highly confidential, but what we will do is when we go out to a community, we are planning to ask the community who is the identified Elders, let them know that we are in that community and then speak to them about what concerns they may have, and speak to them about and engage them in any sort of work that we would do outside of kind of one-to-one individual advocacy work. I hope that answers the question. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Go ahead, Mr. Mike.

Mr. Mike (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for your response. Your 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that partnership agreements, also known as protocols, have in place between the Office of the Representative Children Youth and Department of Education, Department of Family Services and Department of Health and Department of Justice. How would you describe your Office's working relationship with each of these departments? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank the member for the inquiry. GN RCYO protocol was developed and we signed it back in 2023 -- yeah, it was finalized in August of 2023. Originally we had individually protocols with each department, and in 2021 it was put forward actually by the Department of Justice that what if we combine them to one protocol, which we did, and then we finalized it in 2023.

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The purpose of a protocol is to, basically it's a guide for how we work cooperatively to implement the Child and Family -- or to implement the Representative for Children and Youth Act. In terms of the representative's relationship with each department, as I previously stated, the primary relationship that we have, or the ongoing contact we have is with the Department of Family Services. That relationship has been I would say strained at times for the reasons that I set out in my Opening Comments.

We have struggled with receiving information from the Department. The protocol sets out how we deliver individual advocacy services, systemic and critical injury, and it sets how many days we give notice to a department, notifications of cases, those sorts of things. And again, as I've stated earlier, there's been some significant struggles between the Department of Family Services and the Representative for Children and Youth Office, to the point that I've been considering withdrawing from that protocol, the Representative's Office.

In terms of the relationship between the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and the Department of Education, I've had no concerns. We have a very good working relationship. And as I said in my message, it's the response. When a concern is brought to our attention, we give notice to the department that we received a concern and let them know that we're going to open an individual advocacy file, we're going to conduct a review of some sort. And the response from the Department of Health, Justice and Education is timely and they are very open to providing us information. Generally speaking, it's always accurate. There's been no concerns related to that.

Also, and I'll give you an example. Recently a case came to our attention related to a young person who did not fall within our mandate;

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they were over the age of 19. And I reached out -- we reached out to the Department of Justice and the Department of Health because we were quite concerned about this young person, and the response was instantaneous how quickly things came together. And, again, there was no -- we couldn't intervene because the young person was over the age of 19. So that's where the difference in relation is, is response to concerns and providing us with accurate information. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Go ahead, Mr. Mike.

Mr. Mike (interpretation): Before I ask my next question, I'd like to make a statement if it's okay, Mr. Chairman on the response I just got. I hope that children and youth that we are talking about -- every department of the government affects young people's lives, and from what I just heard from the representative from Children and Youth and the other departments that are supposed to be working, and I hope things will improve after what we just heard. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask along those lines, so what specific changes to the agreement that you mentioned that you might want to get out of the protocol? That's what I understood. So what specific changes to the agreements be made under the protocols? Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank the member for the inquiry. I don't see any requirement to make amendments to the actual protocol. What the issue is that is of concern at this point in time is the involvement of the Representative for Children and Youth Office with the Department of Family Services.

The Department of Family Services has recently taken the position that it is up to their discretion when we can be a party to a meeting

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related to a young person. And one of our oversight functions is to gather information.

In the particular case that has prompted the situation of our office looking to withdraw from the GN RCYO protocol is we had been involved with a young person since December of 2025, a very high-risk, multiple placements, out of territory, lots of concerns, and we had requested to attend a meeting about decisions that were going to be made in relation to this young person.

The Department stated to us that child protection requires private space in which to consider information related to the matter, and decision-making related to child protection had to have a protected space and that it was the Department's position that they would -- it was at their discretion when we would be invited to a meeting. So that is the issue at hand.

Our position is that we gather information, we are completing oversight function. And part of - - and at meetings child protection decision-making shouldn't be a closed environment. The whole purpose of making decisions for young people is to get as many perspectives at the table as possible and to consider the best interest of young people.

Our presence at meetings, particularly in child welfare matters, is to ensure that children and youth, their interests are represented and that their voice is heard, and that any decision that's made, their best interest is considered. And the best interest criteria is set out in the Child and Family Services Act under section 3. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Mike, go ahead.

Mr. Mike: *Qujannamiik*. In your 2025-2026 annual reports message from the representative, you make reference to individuals working in

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independent offices who experience resistance from departments. Can you describe some specific examples of what you mean by resistance? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. Ms. Bates, go ahead.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the question. So when I talk about in the message experiencing resistance from departments, this is exactly what I'm speaking about. When the department we contact, particularly the Department of Family Services, and we request information, at times we've been met with no response or delayed responses. Additionally, the resistance is to our involvement, involvement in meetings, involvement in hearing information on what is happening and how the decision-making is occurring.

And when I put in "departments" plural, that was an error on my part. It is the Department of Family Services. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Mike, go ahead.

Mr. Mike (interpretation): I only have two more. In the opening message from the Representative for Children and Youth 2025-2026, it makes reference to (interpretation ends) "individuals working in the independent offices who experience resistance from the departments." How would you describe your departments' working relationship with the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth? All departments can answer. Whoever. I don't know, Chair. I'll leave it with you. Thanks.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Mike. I agree we can start with Mr. Ellsworth, and we'll start first with the Department of Family Services.

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Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for that very broad question, and I thank the Representative for her representations to the Committee with respect to the challenges that we experience while managing significant operational change at the Department of Family Services.

I would say that overall the relationship between Ms. Bates and I is respectful, diplomatic, candid. We enjoy candid conversations regularly about some of the challenges that she's raised in this committee.

I will also, however, qualify that statement that there have been challenges with some of our staff in some of our offices. A lot of those challenges, in my respectful view, arise from competing priorities with their actual case load with the changes that we're attempting to implement, and with the volume of inquiries that we're receiving from the Representative for Children and Youth. Some staff reporting up to 30, 40 percent of their time is spent responding to some of these inquiries.

And that gives rise to concerns clearly that Jane, or Ms. Bates, has articulated. My apologies, Mr. Chair. We continue to strive to improve.

One of the members mentioned our staffing reality right now. Oftentimes there is transiency in our operations, and there are chances or times when perhaps new staff aren't aware of their reporting obligations. We have issued staff guidance on the matter.

There is a standard of practice for social workers that they learn and are trained on with respect to the importance of responding to the Representative for Children and Youth when she's undertaking a review.

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I won't sit here and profess that the relationship is topnotch. We do have our challenges. I know that the work remains for us to improve how we respond to her requests for information.

I will also qualify that again, Mr. Chair, by indicating that when a social worker is in the moment in a very tenuous situation with a child who is perhaps in significant danger, we find it difficult to be in a review process at that time. So managing the actual needs of the child, the social worker, the supervisors, the managers, while simultaneously engaging with the Representative in Children and Youth, we found that to be difficulty.

Mr. Chair, if you would allow, I know I've been long, but I think Mr. Greaves may have some additional context, as he is the operational lead of the Family Wellness Division, if you allow, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. Go ahead, Mr. Greaves.

Mr. Greaves: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so I would agree with Representative Bates with regards to the relationship being strained.

The social workers underground oftentimes report with regards to the competing interest that's already been spoken about, and also with regards to the understanding of why some of the information is being sought just for the sake of clarity.

And so there's sometimes miscommunication with regards to what is the information that is being asked of the workers. When there are staffing shortages in a community, that puts a challenge where other workers now need to examine files and reports of other workers and put that information together. And oftentimes it may not be done in a timely manner.

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And so it creates a conflict that the Representative Bates spoke about with regards to timeliness. And also representative Bates spoke about accurate information when someone else who is not the primary case manager is, you're in the file, may report information not as accurate as the person who is the author of that information. And so we recognize the challenges.

We have centralized the reporting back to our headquarters in Iqaluit, and we designated one of our outside resource to correlate all the information to ensure that our QA team reviews that information, and that senior managers review that information for accuracy and for understanding of the information that's been asked for.

So we've taken steps on our end to address the concern. It's a perfect concern for myself as I continue to instruct our social workers with regards to we're doing our best to prioritize any inquiry from the representative office and ensure that information gets to them in a timely manner.

And I appreciate the Representative is oftentimes extend deadlines so that information could be sought and that accurate information is sent through the Office regarding any young people who they have concerns about. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Greaves. I'll now move to Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs. Ms. Fowler, go ahead.

Ms. Fowler: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The instructions that my Office has with the Representative are quite limited in comparison and in volume to my colleagues here at the table. But the ones that we have had have been quite cordial and heavily focused on statistics.

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And as I alluded to in my opening remarks, we are limited sometimes by the accessibility of some of that data and the timeliness of the information that we seek from outside sources. But other than that, I leave it to my other colleagues to share their experience. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Fowler. We'll now move to the Department of Health. Ms. Hunt, go ahead.

Ms. Hunt: Thank you to the member for the question. Health has regular proactive meetings with the RCYO. Those meetings are an opportunity for us to take a collaborative approach to resolving systemic issues, to identifying areas of collaboration or addressing issues on individual advocacy cases. So we also do planning, identifying opportunities and knowledge exchange with the RCYO.

Ms. Bates and I, if there is a matter that requires our level, we'll pick up the phone and have a conversation with one another so that we can ensure that we're having conversations with our teams to provide common messaging, how to clarify, understanding and direction.

We have recently worked with the RCYO's Office to support a session here in Iqaluit with the parent professionals, so that the RCYO can do a session in November or December on things that our teams and staff need to know about the RCY Office, how they can help with cases that are related to the work that they're doing. And when it's appropriate, to also leverage the RCYO's office.

It's important that we also recognize that we engage with the RCYO to support children and families, as well as work with the RCYO when there may be areas or advocacy that they would like from our departments. Qujannamiik.

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Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Hunt. We'll move to the Department of Justice. Ms. Ellsworth.

Ms. Ellsworth: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman (interpretation ends). The Department of Justice, we have a very respectful working relationship with the Representative for Children and Youth. Our main communications between us are through mostly e-mail when they are inquiring about a certain file. But also, we always have the opportunity to meet twice a year, and they invite us to their office twice a year. They're very welcoming, and we have candid discussions on issues facing children and youth for justice. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Ellsworth. Finally, Ms. Hainnu, go ahead.

Ms. Hainnu: *Qujannamiik.* (Interpretation)
Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We work with the Representative of Children and Youth in many areas, and if it involves one child and correspondences may take a particular child in which community, the child is (indiscernible) we identify that, and we identify our staff in our schools that the Representative of Children and Youth will be working with you concerning this student or child.

So, in short, there is communication there. And maybe it's not for one individual. The youth also provides information, and they may request information, and we have to gather information if it involves a teacher or a student, or if there was an incident or an injury and so forth, when information is required to be gathered, we gather the information.

And we have a good understanding. We normally call each other at work. Best approach we may take. And on occasions on a -- these are also outlined in our Annual Report, and we work with Ms. Bates with regulations

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in my previous answer, it's a challenge for the Department of Family Services at least to balance the nature and volume and expansive detailed inquiries that we are regularly and routinely receiving from the Representative from Children and Youth.

However, the usefulness of that is not something I can contextualize, because it is useful in the sense that the Representative for Children and Youth uses that information to inform recommendations.

And so I would say on the part of the Department of Family Services, Mr. Chair, at least is that we provide the details to the extent that we can, recognizing that challenges remain, and we certainly look forward to recommendations arising from those reviews of the Representative for Children and Youth. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. I'm not sure if we have to hear from all the departments on this, unless you want to reply. We're good? Okay, thank you.

Our next -- that's it, Mr. Mike? Thank you. Our next area of questions is regarding child sexual abuse, and I'll open the floor to questions from the members. Mr. Taqtu, go ahead.

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My questioning will be towards Representative for Children and Youth.

"Your 2023-2024 annual report to the Legislative Assembly indicated that "child sexual abuse in Nunavut continues to be a crisis ... that has remained knowingly unaddressed."

What are your current observations regarding the Government of Nunavut's response to this issue? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Ms. Bates.

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Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the member for the question. With respect to child sexual abuse, one of the primary concerns that our office has raised on numerous occasions is the lack of accurate data related to child sexual abuse.

What I'm specifically referring to -- and you can see in our annual reports -- in the Status of Young Nunavummiut section, one of the indicators of child sexual abuse is the number of referrals that the Department of Family Services receives related to sexual harm. And if you look at our annual reports year over year, there is often significant gaps in that information, specifically the referral section.

In the 2025-2026 Annual Report, you will note in the Status of Young Nunavummiut section, the referral section is very, very limited in terms of 119 were recorded for sexual harm, but there was no breakdown of what that looked like.

So all referrals, as I understand it, to the Department of Family Services are coded in terms of parent or caregiver is engaged in or attempted to engage in a sexual act with a child, sexual exploitation, none of that information was filled out for the 2025-2026 year, despite the having the Matrix system has been in place for several years.

So I'm unable to comment on the prevalence or what the numbers will tell you in terms of sexual abuse, except to say that the Department of Family Services had 119 referrals, if you will, regarding sexual harm. But the nature of that sexual harm is unknown, because it's not expansive information.

In terms of the Sexual Abuse Action Plan, to my knowledge, the Standing Committee made a recommendation that an action plan be

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 ለሕግና ፍትሕ ሚኒስቴር ረዳዊ ጥራት ለማረጋገጥ
 ለሕግና ፍትሕ ሚኒስቴር ረዳዊ ጥራት ለማረጋገጥ
 ለሕግና ፍትሕ ሚኒስቴር ረዳዊ ጥራት ለማረጋገጥ

ᐃᑲᓯᕙᐅᑕᖅ (ᐅᕈᕈᐱᐣᑦ): ᖁᐅᓴᐃᒥᑲ, ᒥᑕ ᑕᖅᐅ.

[illegible]

Δ⁶/Δ⁷C¹³ (‰) (Δ⁶Δ¹³C): 9.5 ± 0.2. Γ¹ < Δ¹³C.

[illegible][illegible]

created and tabled. And to my knowledge, that has not occurred as yet. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Taqtu, go ahead.

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Chair. On June 25, 2025, the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated issued a formal announcement declaring that suicide “remains a crisis in Nunavut.”

Do you recommend that the government should formally declare child sexual abuse to be a crisis? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the member for the question. I had stated several years ago -- I think you quoted my message that day, my Opening Comments -- I said, "child sexual abuse was a crisis." Can I say that today? No, not based on numbers, because I don't have any.

However, given the state of child welfare, I would suspect that child sexual abuse is still very much a concern that needs to be addressed. And I would stand by the recommendation that an action plan needs to be implemented in terms of addressing child sexual abuse.

What I said in my Opening Comments, and I'll just reiterate this, is don't underestimate the impact that it has on when you stabilize, or when you have an affected child welfare system, the impact it has, and one of the impacts it has or when the outcomes you should see is a reduced number of incidences or referrals regarding sexual abuse. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Taqtu.

[illegible][illegible]

በዚህ ልሳኔ በሰላም ምርጫ ሲካሄድ
 ርዕሰ ምክር ቤቱ የሚሰጡት ልማት
 ለሀገሪቱ የሚያስፈልጉትን ምርጫ
 ስርዓት ለማሳካት ይረዳል።

ᐃᑲᓴᐅᑕᖅ (ᑕᕈᐱᐢᑭ): ᐱᓴ ᐅᑕᓪ.

[illegible]

ᐃᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ (ᐃᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ): ᑦᑲᑦ ᑲᑦᑲᑦ.

[illegible]

$\Delta^b \nabla^c$ (ጋኒቦጋ): ኖልታፊ፣ ገር ርጌ. ገን
 $\leq \Delta^c$.

[illegible]

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Chair. My next question is leaning towards the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs.

On June 25, 2025, the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated issued a formal announcement declaring that suicide “remains a crisis in Nunavut.”

My question is: what is the Government of Nunavut's position regarding the issuing of a similar declaration concerning child sexual abuse? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Ms. Fowler, go ahead.

Ms. Fowler: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the member for the question. The discussion about declaring child sexual abuse a crisis has not been the topic of conversation, at least to date. The discussions have been around the development of that child sexual abuse action plan and the work that's progressing to get to a stage that we can put some action behind some of those words. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Fowler. Mr. Taqtu.

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Chair. My next question is for the Representative's Office. The Government of Nunavut's response to the Standing Committee's Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Representative for Children and Youth indicates that "the integration of the role of the Umingmak Centre into a Department of Family Services standards and procedures is complete, and the department is identifying resources that would support the Umingmak Centre's expansion plan."

To what extent does your office work with the Umingmak Centre? Thank you, Chair.

ᐃᑦᓴᐅᐸᑦ (ᐆᕈᐱᐣᐤ): ᐢᐸ ᐸᑦᐆ, ᐊᐱ.

[illegible]

፲፭፻፲፱ ጥቅምት ፳፻፲፱ ምዕራባዊ ስልጣን ለሰጠው ሰነድ ምላሽ ሰጥቶ ለሰነዱ ተቃራኒ ማሳሰቢያ አቀረበ፡፡

ᐃᑲᓯᕙᐅᑕᖅ (ᐅᕗᕗᐱᐣ): ᖁᐅᓴᕈᑦ, ᑦᕿᑕ ᑕᖅᐅ. ᑦᕿᑕ
ᐅᐅᑦᕿᐅᑕ.

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

ርፍጋ (ጋንታበህጽ)፡ ናዲሞዊ፣ ልኮጭርፍ፡
 ከበሊናኛ ህይወትጥረት ዋጋ፣ ልጅ ለጥራጅ
 ሥራ፣ ህይወት፡ ናዲሞዊ፡

[illegible]

ጊዜ ልዩነት (ጋንታህጋ): ናይካሮኒያ፣ ልክላዊርኤ፣
ላዮክሰርኤ፣ ላዮክሰርኤ፣ ላዮክሰርኤ፣ ላዮክሰርኤ፣
ላዮክሰርኤ፣ ላዮክሰርኤ፣ ላዮክሰርኤ፣ ላዮክሰርኤ፣

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the member for the question. Our office again is not a service provider. But in terms of individual advocacy we do have contact with the Umingmak Centre to check in with them in terms of what is happening for a young person who is involved with the Umingmak Centre.

We have also received referrals from the Umingmak Centre from time to time. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Taqtu, go ahead.

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Chair. My couple questions are leaning towards the Family Service.

The Government of Nunavut’s response to the Standing Committee’s Report on Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Representative for Children and Youth indicates that development of an action plan to address child sexual abuse and sexual violence in Nunavut is “underway through the Nunavut Child Abuse and Neglect Agreement Committee.”

As of today, what is the status of this work, and when will the plan be tabled in the Legislative Assembly? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the member for the question. I would advise the committee today that the Child Abuse Neglect Response Agreement was the pre-cursor or the vehicle by which the Child Sexual Abuse Action Plan would be developed.

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

ርዕስ (ጋንጎባር): ናይኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡ ወደ
 ስዊዘርላንድ ከሚሰሩ ናይኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡ 2022-
 2023 ልምድ፡፡ ወደኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡ ወደኤቲኦጵያ
 ልምድ፡፡ ወደኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡ ወደኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡
 ወደኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡ ወደኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡ ወደኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡
 ወደኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡ ወደኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡ ወደኤቲኦጵያ ልምድ፡፡

፲፭፻፲፱ ጥቅምት ፳፱ ዓ.ም. ለፌዴራል ፖሊስ ሰጥቶታል።

ᐃᔭᑦᑲᓂ (ᐅᕈᕈᕐ): ᖁᓄᓇᒥᔭ, ᑦᕐᑲ ᑲᔭᐅ. ᑦᕐ
ᐅᑲᓄᑦ.

ጥር ብሔራዊ (ጋኅባህ): ልዩጭርኛ,
 ከበለጸፈ ርዕሰ ልሳሌ ልሳሌ
 ሥርዓተ-ጥበቃውን ይገልጻል፡፡ ሥርዓተ-ጥበቃውን
 ይገልጻል፡፡ 2019-ጥር ሥርዓተ-ጥበቃውን
 ይገልጻል፡፡ 2022-ጥር ሥርዓተ-ጥበቃውን
 ይገልጻል፡፡ ሥርዓተ-ጥበቃውን
 ይገልጻል፡፡ ሥርዓተ-ጥበቃውን
 ይገልጻል፡፡ ሥርዓተ-ጥበቃውን
 ይገልጻል፡፡ ሥርዓተ-ጥበቃውን

[illegible]

The work on the plan paused during the election period, and until such time as the mandate was developed. And clearly the mandate reflects this government's desire to improve services for children and families in a general way, but also specifically.

And so cabinet has now confirmed the revised Child Abuse and Neglect Response Agreement as recently as June 2026. That committee is being reactivated to continue the work on the Child Sexual Abuse Action Plan. I'm looking at an early draft as we speak, Mr. Chair.

So I suspect -- I don't want to commit the committee's group to timelines, but I expect by likely spring session we will have something to table for the committee's review. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. Mr. Taqtu.

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Chair. Standing Committee would like to know which department is leading the work. Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Mr. Ellsworth, go ahead.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Much like this House, we're operating by consensus through the relevant stakeholders of the Child Abuse and Neglect Response Agreement. Those stakeholders include Health, Justice, Education, the RCMP, the Umingmak Centre, and of course Family Services.

We lead many strategies, but we believe that working through consensus on these kinds of approaches ensures a whole of government approach and will likely and hopefully result in outcomes that are improved for children who may be the victims of these situations, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

ፈኅዳርጽ (ጋኢብህር): ናዕላዊ፣ ገር ልዩነት.
ገር ርጽ.

[illegible][illegible]

ልኦላዊርጭ (ጋኒትባህ)፡ ሳምንቱ ደረጃ፣ ብርር ርጭጋ። ብር
 ልድራይ።

ᐃᑭᓴᑦ (ᑕᔨᔨᑕᑕ): ᓄᓪᓇᑭᑦ, ᐃᑲᓯᓂᑭᑦ. ᐱᓴᓗ
ᓄᓪᓇᑭᑦ ᑖᓐᓇ ᐱᓴᓄᑎᑲᓐᓂ. ᑭᓪᑭᑕ 287-
ᓴᑭᑦ. ᐃᑲᓯᓂᑭᑦ, ᓄᓪᓇᑭᑦ.

ᐃᑲᓯᕙᐅᑕᑦᑲ (ᐅᓴᓂᐱᓵ): ᓴᐃᓄᐊᒥᑲ, ᒥᓶᑕ ᐃᐅᑦᓴ፻ᑕ.
ᒥᓶᑕ ᑕᑦᑲᐅ.

[illegible][illegible]

ᐃᐅᓕᓴᑭᓕ (ᐅᑲᑲᐅᐅᐅ): ᓕᐅᑲᓕᐅᑲᓐ, ᐃᓐᑲᐅᐅᑲᓐ.
ᐅᓕᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, ᑲᓕ ᐅᑲᐅᑲᓐ ᐅᐅᓕᐅᓐ ᑲᓐᑲᑲᓐ.

ᐃᔭᑦᐅᑕᓐ (ᐅካሰᐱᑦ): ᑦᑕ ᑦᑖᔭᑦᑕ, ᐊᑏ.

[illegible]

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. Mr. Taqtu.

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Chair. The Government of Nunavut's Response to the Standing Committee's Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Representative for Children and Youth indicates that "the integration of the role of the Umingmak Centre into the Department of Family Services, standards and procedures is complete and the Department is identifying resources that would support the Umingmak Centre's expansion plans."

As of today, what is the status of this work?
Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Mr. Ellsworth, go ahead.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the benefit of context for the committee, the Umingmak Centre is Nunavut's first child advocacy centre, and it was established in 2019.

This work is supported through a multi-department memorandum of understanding which was renewed in 2022 between Family Services, Health, Justice, Education, RCMP, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and Arctic Child and Youth Foundation, which enables the coordinated multi-disciplinary response.

Pediatric services, Mr. Chair, are at the Centre or delivered in participation I should say with Health through contracted physician services. There's a territorial child abuse physician specialist that works out of that organization.

Expansion is being driven by statistics that have been identified as obviously quite problematic. Since April 1, 2025, 265 clinical visits had been provided with a 92.5 percent

ፕላንና ስራዎች ለሚከተሉት ምክር ቤቶች ይደረጋል፡

ᐃᑲᓯᕙᐅᑕᖅ (ᐅᐱᔭᐅᐣᑕ): ᖁᐅᓴᕐᐸᒥᖅ. ᑦᐻᑕ ᑕᖅᐅ, ᐊᐅ.

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

ልኦጥጭርጭ (ጋኒጎባባ): ኖልግዲፍ፣ ገዢ ዘጠጥ። ገዢ ኖልጥጭር፣ ለኢጥጭርጭ? ለኢጥጭር? ገዢ ኖልጥጭር፣ ለኢጥጭር።

የኔኋሪየብ (ጋኒባን)፡ የወጪ፣ ልብጭር፣
 ለቀጠላ፣ ለጥራት ጥራት ጥራት
 ለጥራት ጥራት ጥራት ጥራት ጥራት
 ለጥራት ጥራት ጥራት ጥራት ጥራት

attendance rate. That's important, because attendance rate at hospital visits is much lower, I understand.

And so we're supporting the expansion by ensuring that those services continue to be funded. We're working with our partners at Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated to identify suitable locations outside of Iqaluit for a similar operation that would seek to provide those services in other regional centres. The details of which, Mr. Chair, I don't have before me, but I know that that work is ongoing and we're committed to growing the growth and expansion of Umingmak Centre to better serve Nunavummiut. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Ellsworth. Mr. Taqtu.

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Chair. I thank you for the response. My next question is towards the Department of Justice.

Information provided in the year 2019 by the Department of Justice in Response to a written question asked by a Member of the Legislative Assembly indicated that a total of 307 child sex offenders from Nunavut were listed in the National Sex Offender Registry. As of today, how many registered child sex offenders are living in Nunavut communities?

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Ms. Ellsworth, go ahead.

Ms. Ellsworth: I thank the member for the question. As of today, there is 387. Qujannamiik (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Ellsworth. Mr. Taqtu.

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Chair. To what extent does the Royal Canadian Mounted Police share

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

ልኮሮፕርኤ (ጋኒብህር): ኖልኤፊኑ፣ ገርኤኃርሃብኤ. ገኝ ለፈርካ፣ ልሰ.

[illegible][illegible]

ᐃᑲᓯᐸᐅᑕᑭᑲ (ᐅᐱᓯᐱᐅᐅᑕ): ᓯᐃᑲᑲᐱᑲᑲ, ᑦᐱ ᐸᐃᓯ. ᑦᐱᑕ ᓯᑲᐸᐅᓯᐅᐅᑕᑲ. ᐃᐱᓯᑲᐅᐱᑲᓯᑲᑲᑲᐱᑕ ᓱᑕ?

[illegible][illegible]

ፍፍረኛ (ጋንጋሪ): ፍፍረኛ፣ ልግግግ፣
ፍፍረኛ ልግግግ ልግግግ ልግግግ ልግግግ

the information with the Government of Nunavut concerning the enforcement of offender reporting requirements under federal legislation? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Ms. Ellsworth, go ahead.

Mr. Ellsworth: Through you, Mr. Chair, if I may ask Mr. Blackadar to answer the question. *Qujannamiik.*

Chairman: Mr. Blackadar, go ahead.

Mr. Blackadar: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for the question. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police actually has a dedicated position, a National Sex Offender Registry position within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police here in Nunavut, who monitors all 387 individuals on the registry, and then coordinates with each individual detachment across the territory to ensure that people are reporting when they're supposed to report, their change of address, they maintain their conditions; and they keep those statistics and then report regularly to Public Safety through the Government of Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And they keep those statistics and report regularly to public safety through the Government of Nunavut. Thank you Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Blackadar. Mr. Taqtu, go ahead.

Mr. Taqtu: Thank you, Chair. And thank you for your answer. My next question is towards the Department of Health.

Information provided by the Department of Health in correspondence dated July 2, 2025 indicated that “providing territory-wide figures of child sexual abuse victims” and “community rates of child sex abuse” would be “challenging

[illegible]

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 ለገረጽ ለገረጽ ለገረጽ ለገረጽ ለገረጽ
 ለገረጽ ለገረጽ ለገረጽ ለገረጽ ለገረጽ ለገረጽ

ልኮኖርጽፍ (ጋኒብጋጋ): ናወጫፊ፣ ገር
ናፍጋረፍ፡ ገላ ረፈላ፡

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

without access to the various sources of information that are recommended for a complete surveillance program on child maltreatment.”

What specific actions is the Department of Health taking to address this issue? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Taqtu. Ms. Hunt, go ahead.

Ms. Hunt: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman (interpretation ends), and thank you to the member for the question.

Health is taking a public health approach on this issue. It really is about preventing harm before it happens, collaboration, education, healing programs and services. And, of course, to the member's point, Mr. Chair, that having information is really important.

And so in my opening remarks I talked about the fact that part of our work in response to the RCOY's report is the initiation of planning for a centralized health data platform that helps to connect information from clinical public health teams, virtual care systems and communication and coordination across multiple departments to help us understand what our true picture is, and to work together on ways that we can do prevention, intervention, enforcement, programming and support. Qujannamiik.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Hunt. No more questions. Mr. Kuliktana, you had your hand up earlier. No? Mr. Kablutsiak? Go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Thank you, Chair. Before we move on to the next item, I just want to go back to Operations of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth. A couple questions.

Your Office's 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that you lapsed approximately 30

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percent of your budget for compensation and benefits. What accounts for this lapse? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the member for the question. Staff vacancies. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak, go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Thank you, Chair. My next question is your Office's 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that you lapsed approximately 70 percent of your budget for travel. What accounts for this lapse? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Bates, go ahead.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the member for the question. It's the same issue. We didn't have the staff to travel to the communities, so therefore we didn't go.

In 2025-2026, the two occasions in which we travelled to communities were directly related to specific matters that we were addressing. So that's why we were out addressing those matters. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Any more on this theme? No. Okay, thank you.

I just remind everyone to please wait for the red light to go on before you commence speaking. So just keep that in mind. Thank you.

Our next theme area is "Reviews of Critical Injuries and Deaths," and I open the floor to questions. Mr. Kablutsiak, go ahead.

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Mr. Kablutsiak: Thank you, Chair. My questions will be for the Representative for Children and Youth. Section 4(1)(b) of the Representative for Children and Youth Act came into force on April 1, 2023. It provides that one of the powers of your Office is to “review any matter related to the death or critical injury of any child or youth.”

What are your main observations and recommendations concerning your Office's responsibilities in this area? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the member for the question. The program "Critical Injuries and Deaths" took us about a year to get it up and running. We've been collecting data in terms of the reporting requirement has been in existence -- and when I say the reporting requirement, under the *Representative for Children and Youth Act* there's a requirement for the Department of Family Services, specifically the director of Child and Family Services, to report critical injuries and deaths to our Office, and the coroner to report deaths to our Office.

Reporting of critical injuries particularly has been an ongoing issue, as evidenced through our annual reports. In terms of -- so we've been logging reporting critical injury since 2020. So we have a database that maintenance the number of critical injuries recorded. There has been, continues to be, issues related to what is being reported to our office by Child and Family Services, the Department of Family Services. Again, their current standard and the reporting requirements that they put into place regarding categorizing critical injuries differs from that of the definition our Act.

But in terms of critical injuries, some of our findings of doing reviews of critical injuries,

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there is I think in the back of the 2025-2026 we actually put forward some of our findings from a particular review that we did, and similar findings, again issues related to -- it's difficult to review a critical injury when you have limited documentation to review, and that is and continues to be a challenge. You can't review something that's not there to review.

What we're also finding in that particular matter that's set out in our 2025-2026 is we also noted in that particular one that the findings were -- there were several incidents that weren't actually reported, documented and reported, in that particular critical incident.

So often when we are going to review a critical injury, we request the entire case file from the Department of Family Services, simply so that we can put -- one of our responsibilities is to review the circumstances leading up to the critical injury. And again, information and the collection, the documentation of information is critical in order for us to determine a finding, which has always been a challenge. And that's been, we've been vitally reporting on that.

But our findings again is often there are junctures where there should have been intervention happen. In one critical injury that we reviewed, it involved a young person who had been placed in an extended family foster home, and there were there significant concerns to the home study. Critical record checks had come back positive for violence.

The children were subsequently placed in the household despite the criminal record checks. And also, in addition to that one, the affidavits relating to these children, contained inside the affidavits when we reviewed the file was actually allegations by the parents stating that they were very concerned about that particular placement, that they were concerned that if the children were placed in that particular placement, that they felt that they would be

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harm. And in fact it was well documented through -- there was three separate affidavits that we saw that documentation. And the children were placed anyways, and subsequently very serious harm came to at least one of them. Harm came to a second child as well also living in the household.

And following that critical injury, what we saw was not a proper investigation to be completed. So the incident happened, and then there should be a full investigation by Child Protection, because the child was in care at the time. And that didn't occur. And that is not unusual in what we see in our critical injury reviews when we're looking at files.

Again, all of the files that we review typically come from the Department of Family Services in the child welfare area. I hope that answered your question. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Thank you, Chair. Your 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 Annual Reports indicate that you “classify critical injuries into six categories.” Do you have any plans to review these categories?

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. And just a reminder to you, you don't need to press the buttons for the mic on your table there. Thank you. Go ahead, Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the member for the question. I think you always should be reviewing the definitions of critical injuries, and certainly our classification table I think absolutely does need a review. I think there potentially is -- our classification table doesn't match up with the one that the Department of Family Services has.

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When they developed the standard -- and I think I talked about this in the annual report. When they developed their standard for the reporting of critical injuries and deaths, they did not speak to us or collaborate with us in terms of making that definition what would be considered a reportable, critical injury, which was problematic because it lead to -- obviously, their definition of a critical injury that should be reported to our office verses what we classify as a critical injury are obviously two different things.

But again, I think it is absolutely something that needs to be, we would like to be reviewing. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak, go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: One of the six categories of critical injury is "emotional harm." Can you describe some example of situations that you would consider to fall under this category? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Bates, go ahead.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank you for the question. That section is very wide, but the definition under the Representative for Children and Youth Office states that it reached the threshold of being a critical injury if it causes potentially long-term psychological harm.

And so as such, a lot of the critical injuries that fall into that category would be if a young person witnessed a murder, that would be considered to be psychological harm. Especially if it's a family member, a parent witnessing the suicide of a family member, we classify those as emotional harm. I'm just trying to think. What else is in that category? Those are the primary ones.

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The other one that we also classify in emotional harm is if a young person is, say, absent from a facility for an extended period of time, if no harm comes to them, like physical harm, we would classify the absence from a facility and the potential for emotional long-term psychological harm, that also falls into that category. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak, go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Your 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 Annual Reports make reference to your Offices "critical injuries and deaths database." What measures are in place to protect the security of the sensitive information? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Go ahead, Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the member for the question. The database -- when a critical injury comes to our attention, the actual young person is assigned a client number, basically. And so what's entered into the database is that number. It's not actually the name of that child.

And then additionally any additional information is really the coding whether it's emotional harm, physical harm, sexual harm. And so again, if you were to go into the database today, you would not be able to identify that young person. It's simply that they have an assigned number, and then it's the coding of what the particular harm was. And I should say, our database is completely password protected. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak.

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Mr. Kablutsiak: Your 2024-2025 Annual Report indicates that although the Department of Family Services submitted a total of 395 "critical injury reports," only 134 of them were determined to "qualify as critical injuries as defined by your Office."

Your 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that "72 critical injuries were reported in the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth database. Of these, 63 were reported to the Director of Family and Child Services. Four were reported by a contracted group home, and five critical injuries dating back to 2022, where I identified during an Office of the Representative for Children and Youth review.

The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth does not believe that the figures in table 12 provide a complete or fully accurate representation of the number of critical injuries that occurred during 2025-2026."

Can you explain how you reach this conclusion? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Bates, go ahead.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank the member for the question. During the course of reviewing individual advocacy cases current, we often identify what we would consider to be a critical injury. And then we cross-reference it with our database to see if it has been reported to us. So that is how I know that -- and typically they don't match up.

So currently we are working on a case in which we identified three separate critical injuries that had not been reported to us. And how we do that is we see them inside the individual advocacy files, then we go to our database and see if it's been reported. So I can tell you that's how we conclude that the numbers that we

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have or that have been recorded by the Department are not accurate. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak, go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Thank you, Chair. Your 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that “reports of sexualized violence increased significantly, from 8 in 2024-2025 to 22 in 2025-2026. This increase is concerning and requires further examination to determine whether it reflects an actual increase in incidents, changes in identification or classification, improved reporting, or a combination of these factors.”

As of today, what is the status of your review of this issue? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the member for the question. We haven't furthered our review of that particular area. I think that it's important -- any review has to include the Department of Family Services, because that is where the information comes from. And so that is something that should be undertaken jointly between the Department of Family Services and ourselves. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Thank you, Chair. Your 2024-2025 Annual Report indicates that your Office had initiated four separate reviews of specific incidents of critical injuries to youth. As of today, what is the status of these reviews? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Bates, go ahead.

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Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the member for the question. Currently they are still ongoing. Some of them were awaiting information on still. And so again we haven't completed them.

Additionally, I do know for at least two of them we had to look for information. We turned to other departments to request information. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak, go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Thank you, Chair. Your 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that your office completed a review of a case involving “multiple critical injuries to a young person under the age of five.” Your report indicates that you “concluded that the paramount concern was the Department of Family Services’ ongoing failure to conduct and document child protection investigations.”

In your view, what are the reasons for why the department is not fulfilling these responsibilities? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Bates, go ahead.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the member for the question. I would not want to speculate on -- I think that's a question for the Department of Family Services.

What I can say is the Department does have standards and procedures relating to investigations, and as previously stated, there's also the Child Abuse Neglect Response Agreement currently in place.

What we typically see is that child protection investigations, the standard for child protection investigations is not followed. So they don't

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take the necessary steps that are set out by the standards. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak, go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Thank you, Chair. Your 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that your office had initiated five separate reviews of specific incidents of critical injuries to youth. As of today, what is the status of these reviews? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank the member for the question. They are active ongoing. Again, it takes a great deal of time to collect the information and review all of it and then to come to some findings. So they're active, quite frankly. We're actively reviewing them. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak, do you have more? Go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Your 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that the “review of 11 deaths reported by suicide in 2024-2025 was placed on hold to protect the health and safety” of your Office’s staff. Can you explain how you made this decision? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Bates.

Ms. Bates: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the member for the question. We initiated this review. We requested all the information. We started reviewing the information.

What I can tell you is that we reached a point, or the staff person that was assigned to reviewing this information came to me and

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basically said 'I can't do it anymore, it's so upsetting and so traumatizing.' And there's so many junctures where I saw a young person reaching out wanting help, wasn't receiving it, and it just got to a place where they could not continue doing the review.

So I took the steps -- that was enough for me to say that we needed to place this on hold to ensure that this person wasn't further harmed by the information that they were reviewing. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Bates. Mr. Kablutsiak, go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Thank you, Chair. My next question will be for Department of Family Services.

The Representative of Children and Youths 2024-2025 Annual Report indicates although the Department of Family Services submitted a total of 395 "critical injury reports", only 134 of them were determined to "qualify as critical injuries as defined by the Representative's Office."

How does the Department decide what types of incidents to report? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Mr. Ellsworth, go ahead.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you I would request that Mr. Greaves respond to the inquiry, if you will, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Go ahead, Mr. Greaves.

Mr. Greaves: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, member, for the question. We define critical incident reports by our standards. So standards are outlined with regards to

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different action, different events, different situations that impact the life of a person, and through our standards define that with regards to how we define critical incident, and then we will distribute that information according to our standards. Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Greaves. Mr. Kablutsiak.

Mr. Kablutsiak: And again, to the same department, The Representative for Children and Youth 2025-2026 Annual Report indicates that “the Department of Family Services’ reporting of critical injuries also remains problematic, and the figures provided cannot be considered accurate or reliable.”

What is the Department's response to this concern? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Mr. Ellsworth, go ahead.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And Mr. Chair, as I alluded to earlier, we continue improvement on our data collection and the reliability of our data framework. The reasons for the variabilities are numerous, including training and some of the staff transiency.

Perhaps if you will, Mr. Chair, Mr. Greaves could add some additional context to my response. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Go ahead, Mr. Greaves.

Mr. Greaves: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, member, for the questions. And so when we review the difference in terms of the numbers from the Representative's Office and Family Services Office, what we've done is that we've reviewed that particular standard that defines the category by which we define

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critical incidents and updated our standards to reflect the changes in the difference.

One of the things that with regards to how we define the difference also could lead to how our workers are defining critical incidents and the ongoing training that we're doing to update workers in their understanding and their commitment and obligation to report incidences to the Representative Office. And so to date, these are the steps that we take to shorten the gap and the difference between what the Representative and how they define critical incidences and how other department define critical incidences.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Greaves. Mr. Kablutsiak, go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: Thank you, Chair. And also, this is to Department of Justice. The Representative for Children and Youth 2024-2025 Annual Report indicates that the Office of the Chief Coroner has been "in the process of completing a full departmental review, including the digitization of legacy records."

As of today, what is the status of this work?
Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Ellsworth, go ahead.

Ms. Ellsworth: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) And I thank the member for the question. So we had to put this on hold just for a little bit just because our Chief Coroner, Michael Foote, had resigned last year, and we put it out for competition when we recently hired a new Chief Coroner. Her name is Maryanna Savintis, and she started in July. And so she's just learning her role and she's going to pick up on this and continue working towards the digital form.
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Ellsworth. Mr. Kablutsiak, go ahead.

Mr. Kablutsiak: And this will be my last question. How many deaths of children and youth occurring in Nunavut are still under your review by the Office to determine the cause of death? Thank you, Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Kablutsiak. Ms. Ellsworth, go ahead.

Ms. Ellsworth: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (Interpretation ends) And I thank the member for the question. So I'm going to speak on behalf of the Coroner's Office and the information that I'm aware with the department.

But as of September 1, there were 18 deaths that are aged 18; and of those, nine individuals were under five years old. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Ellsworth. I think the question was how many are under review by the Office to determine the cause of death? Are all of those that you've mentioned? Thank you.

Mr. Ellsworth: I think the Department of Health would be in a position to answer that question. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Hunt, go ahead.

Ms. Hunt: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (Interpretation ends) Thank you for the question. The coroner reported in 2024-2025 that there are -- in 2024-2025 one pending final autopsy. And in 2025-2026 seven pending final autopsies. *Qujannamiik*.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Hunt. I've got a couple of questions from the responses that were given earlier. This one for Justice.

Going back to the issue of registered sex offenders, the Government of Nunavut testimony indicated that the number has increased dramatically, from 307 to 387 in just a few years. What are the Government of Nunavut's conclusions on why that number has increased? Is it more convictions, or more accurate counting of existing offenders? Can you elaborate on that, please? Go ahead, Ms. Ellsworth.

Ms. Ellsworth: (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (Interpretation ends) Through you, Mr. Chair, if I can have Mr. Blackadar, the ADM, answer the question. *Qujannamiik*.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Blackadar. Go ahead.

Mr. Blackadar: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it's a number of different things that I think that fit into that. Some of it is education, public education; more people are reporting. And I think we're seeing more offences in some cases. And it's probably better training, better outreach by not only the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, but I think other government departments. And so these offences tend to wax and wane based on that.

And if I could maybe draw one analogy that happens when police officers especially go into communities, they go into schools, speak to young people about how to contact the police if they need anything. We see these calls going to the police sort of skyrocketed that period of time. And I think that's what it is.

I think if we look at the trend over a longer period of time, it's not that there's been a spike of sexual offence; it's just more people are coming forward because of a better education and better outreach services from all departments within the Government of Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Blackadar. And my final one for Family Services. If you wouldn't mind responding to the Representative's observations regarding the quote, "ongoing failure to conduct and document child protection investigations," Mr. Ellsworth. Thank you.

Mr. Ellsworth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would ask through you that Mr. Greaves respond to this inquiry. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman: Thank you. Go ahead, Mr. Greaves.

Mr. Greaves: Thank you. Can you repeat the question again?

Chairman: The representative made observations regarding the ongoing failure to conduct and document child protection investigations.

Mr. Greaves: We recognize the challenges that the representative have spoken about with regards to documentation. To address that issue, what we've done is we've implemented a robust quality assurance team that has the opportunity to review any files that has been we approved by the frontline staff. We provided additional training and education for a supervisor with regards to their obligation, and reviewing these files when it comes to their attention. And when these files are approved and move through our headquarters for review, our quality assurance team is able to assess and review the information and then return it to the staff for further improvements.

And so we put several systems in place to address any gaps in learning or any gaps in understanding and fulfilling their obligation as frontline workers doing investigation. And so these are the things that we've done to address

the issue that the Representative Office has brought to our attention.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Greaves. Thank you for your response, Mr. Greaves.

Looking at the time, quarter to 5 today. We've finished with that last theme. We'll be starting with a new theme tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock regarding systematic reviews and individual advocacy activities. But for now we'll end the day today, and we'll see you all tomorrow morning at 9 a.m. Thank you.

>>Committee adjourned at 16:43