

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut

Speaker

Hon. Tony Akoak

(Gjoa Haven)

Hon. David Akeagok

(Quttiktuq)

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

Hon. P.J. Akeagok

(Iqaluit-Niaqunnguut)

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

Bobby Anavilok

(Kugluktuk)

Janet Brewster

(Iqaluit-Sinaa)

Hon. Pamela Gross

(Cambridge Bay)

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

George Hickes

(Iqaluit-Tasiluk)

Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole

Hon. David Joanasie

(South Baffin)

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

Joelie Kaerner

(Amittuq)

Mary Killiktee

(Uqummiut)

Hon. Lorne Kusugak

(Rankin Inlet South)

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

Adam Lightstone

(Iqaluit-Manirajak)

Hon. John Main

(Arviat North-Whale Cove)

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

Solomon Malliki

(Aivilik)

Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk

(Pangnirtung)

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

Hon. Karen Nutarak

(Tununiq)

Hon. Daniel Qavvik

(Hudson Bay)

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

Joanna Quassa

(Aggu)

Inagayuk Quqqiaq

(Netsilik)

Alexander Sammurtok

(Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet)

Joe Savikataaq

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**Iqaluit, Nunavut
Tuesday, March 5, 2024**

Members Present:

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

>>*House commenced at 9:59*

Item 1: Opening Prayer

Speaker (Hon. Tony Akoak)(interpretation): Good morning. (interpretation ends) Before we proceed with the session this morning, I ask Mr. David Akeeagok to lead us in prayer.

>>*Prayer*

Speaker: Welcome, everyone, to the proceedings this morning, people watching on TV and listening to the radio and people in the Assembly.

Item 2. Ministers' Statements. Hon. Government House Leader, Mr. Joanasie.

Item 2: Ministers' Statements

Minister's Statement 391 – 6(2): Minister Absent from the House

Hon. David Joanasie: Good morning, Mr. Speaker and Nunavummiut. Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise members that the Hon. John Main is currently not in the House and may be arriving later this morning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Minister's Statement 392 – 6(2): Community Visits – Chesterfield Inlet, Whale Cove, Taloyoak, and Cambridge Bay

Hon. P.J. Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say "good morning" to my fellow MLAs and Nunavummiut who are listening to the proceedings.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, after Christmas, I as well as several other cabinet members took the opportunity to visit Whale Cove and Chesterfield Inlet.

Most recently, as we headed to Cambridge Bay for the Kitikmeot Trade Show, I had the pleasure of visiting Taloyoak. I would like to thank the regular members, our good friends, Alex Sammurток, Joseph Quqqiaq, as well as my Deputy Premier, Pamela Gross,

as well as Minister Main for their invitations and their organizational help, as well as the warm welcome we all received.

Mr. Speaker, our 25 Nunavut communities are spread over more than two million square kilometres. Each of these communities, whether small or large, sees themselves at a great distance from the seat of this government.

Nothing can replace meeting with municipal leaders on their home ground. This is where we learn about community innovations and community needs. I met with Mayors Oliver Shipton, Simionie Sammurtok, Lenny Panigayak, as well as Wayne Gregory as well as all their councillor members.

From face-to-face conversations with leaders, meeting with the students at our schools, and elders, we learn the details about our communities, even more so at community feasts, and tours allow us to be able to appreciate the communities we serve firsthand.

It's no surprise that each community emphasizes the need for more housing. We cannot build fast enough, yet I know that Nunavut 3000 will make a major difference, with 3,000 new homes by 2030. By the end of 2024, each community will have new housing under construction.

Each community was so warm and welcoming. With that, each community and each visit will inform our work. *Qujannamiik* to all who had shared their time with us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Minister of Human Resources, Ms. Nakashuk.

Minister's Statement 393 – 6(2): The Move to Fusion Cloud

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

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share my department's progress on the transition to Fusion Cloud, an enterprise resource planning system that will modernize and improve human resource operations across the Government of Nunavut. This comprehensive, integrated system will simplify and automate our human resources processes and will streamline data, leading to increased efficiency, accountability, and reliability of information.

My department's current priority is to focus on streamlining our hiring processes and leave and attendance practices. Advances in these two areas are needed to be able to staff vacancies more efficiently and to ensure more timely and accurate processing of employee pay.

While other Fusion Cloud human resource modules are still in the planning phase, our implementation teams are busy preparing human resources data for system migration to ensure a greater degree of accuracy and reliability when the modules are launched. Many of our Human Resources Manual directives are being updated to reflect and align with the modernized and more efficient processes. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

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

Minister's Statement 394 – 6(2): Isirvik

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues (interpretation) and Nunavummiut.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, with this statement today, I am pleased to formally launch Isirvik. Isirvik is a new website and research portal hosted by the Nunavut Research Institute, which is the science division of Nunavut Arctic College.

As members are aware, Isirvik means “entrance” and this website is meant to be an entrance into Nunavut’s exciting world of research. Isirvik houses information about over 2,000 research projects that have taken place in the territory since 2004 and were licensed under the territory’s *Scientists Act*, which is administered by the college.

Through Isirvik, Nunavummiut now have much easier access to information about research underway in our territory in the social, health, physical and natural sciences disciplines. The portal has a user-friendly interactive interface that allows people to search research projects by location, research discipline, research topic, and time frame. Search results are displayed on interactive maps that show the location of research field activities and provide plain-language summary information about each project.

Mr. Speaker, it is our hope that Isirvik will not only be used by Nunavummiut to learn more about research, but also help guide institutions and researchers interested in conducting future studies in Nunavut. Information shared on Isirvik will help reduce duplication of research efforts and facilitate partnerships that meaningfully involve Nunavummiut in addressing research questions of importance to us. The college also hopes the users of this portal will recognize that scientific research in Nunavut can only succeed with the direct involvement, support, and leadership of Nunavummiut. This site can be found at www.isirvik.ca.

In closing, I would like to recognize Sylvia Pewatooalook, an artist based in Mittimatalik, for designing the logo and illustrations on the website. Like me, Sylvia is a graduate of the Environmental Technology Program. I would like to thank Sylvia for her contribution to this important initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

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

Minister's Statement 395 – 6(2): Simata Pitsiulak Aviation Scholarship Funding Increase

Hon. David Akeeagok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to announce that the Simata Pitsiulak Aviation Scholarship funding will be increased in the coming fiscal year. The total funding available will increase from \$30,000 in total available funding to \$105,000 per year beginning in fiscal year 2024, an increase of \$75,000.

(interpretation ends) One of our airline carriers has committed to provide aviation training in our territory and our department's commitment to assist in their endeavours as we like to see more training for Nunavummiut in Nunavut.

The Department of Economic Development and Transportation is committed to building Nunavut's transportation workforce by promoting careers in our aviation industries. The Simata Pitsiulak Aviation Scholarship supports this objective by providing grants to Nunavut students actively enrolled in an aviation-based program area of study.

This fall I recognized four Nunavummiut that have been successful recipients of this scholarship and pursuing their careers in aviation, and I hope that in the coming years, I will make more of these great announcements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Ministers' Statements. Hon. Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Minister's Statement 396 – 6(2): FANS Comprehensive Review

Hon. Pamela Gross: *Quana*, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to Nunavummiut and everyone here in the House with us today.

Mr. Speaker, reinvesting in education is one of the key pillars in *Katujjiluta*. Under this priority, this Assembly committed to improving the effectiveness of the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students (FANS) program.

To explore potential options for how we can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students program, the Department of Education, with the active participation of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, put in the hard work needed to complete a comprehensive review, which I look forward to sharing with all Members of this House later today.

Mr. Speaker, the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students Comprehensive Review provided an opportunity to collaboratively and thoroughly examine the entire program to target areas for improvement. Through this review, officials have shared numerous options and recommendations designed to better support our students' journey to higher learning.

Mr. Speaker, our Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students program should provide Nunavut students with the support needed to move forward on their post-secondary path and help them create new opportunities for their future. Through advanced education, our students can contribute even more to their families, communities, and the overall governance of our territory. This is why the values of Pijitsirniq and Pijariuqsarniq were at the forefront of this critical work.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize this is one step in the process and that we need to continue to work together to identify the best approach to actioning recommendations from this review. As we have committed to in *Katujjiluta*, I am tasking my officials to move forward with costing out each of these recommendations to determine feasibility and possible timelines, along with practical options and actions for further consideration.

Given the scope of the recommendations, this government and this House will need to make critical decisions regarding the resources and legislative changes required to improve this program. I look forward to working with my colleagues and this House to advance this goal. I commit to keeping you updated at this work in progress. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Item 3. Members' Statements.

Before we proceed to the first name, Mr. Malliki and Mr. Anavilok will not be in the House this morning.

Members' Statements. Member for Netsilik, Mr. Quqqiaq.

Item 3: Members' Statements

Member's Statement 520 – 6(2): Recognizing Gina Pizzo and Elizabeth Lyall

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge Gina Pizzo of Taloyoak, who received a 30-year service award, 39 years to be exact, Mr. Speaker, and that was six days ago at Netsilik School.

My acknowledgements to say congratulations to Gina Pizzo, who is a great teacher and, in many of those years, has been a great principal and a great contributor to our community of Taloyoak, leader, and role model to many. Thank you, Gina Pizzo.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I rise today also to recognize Elizabeth Lyall, who also received a long-term service award and it is a 30-year service award, which she received here in Iqaluit during the conference for early learning childhood meeting that was held. Elizabeth Lyall will retire from Aboriginal Head Start as a manager for the preschool after the school year.

Mr. Speaker, Ms., Elizabeth Lyall's wish was always to get a new building for the little preschoolers. Today, in this time and age, Ms. Elizabeth Lyall's wish is fulfilled as they have a new building for the little preschoolers located at the same location at the new Kitikmeot Inuit Association building in Taloyoak.

It is my acknowledgement to say thank you to Gina Pizzo and Elizabeth Lyall, and congratulations for the long-term service award. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Members' Statements. Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Mr. Lightstone.

Member's Statement 521 – 6(2): Inuktitut-speaking Teachers

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In November 2020 during the Fifth Assembly of Nunavut, we passed Bill 25, which made significant changes to the *Education Act* and the *Inuit Language Protection Act* and amendments respecting Inuktitut education in our schools. The changes were deemed necessary, in part because the government was running out of time to meet its legislated deadline to provide Inuit language of instruction in every grade.

Mr. Speaker, last week I tabled a document containing information that was provided by the Department of Education on the number of educators in Nunavut schools who, in 2023, received a language allowance based on their proficiency in Inuktitut. Mr. Speaker, this document demonstrates the importance of information that can be used to evaluate the government's progress towards meeting its mandate.

Mr. Speaker, in the table that I tabled last week, this situation does not look promising. Out of the 810 filled teaching positions, only 230 spoke Inuktitut, and that's less than 30 percent. Of note, 27 out of our 45 schools were actually below this 30 percent mark. What is most concerning, 5 out of the 45 schools have less than 10 percent, between 6 percent and 9 percent of their teachers are bilingual in Inuktitut, and most concerning of all is the fact that four of our schools don't have any Inuktitut-speaking bilingual teachers.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation now provides that by July 2026, just two years from now, the first deadline to provide language of instruction in Inuktitut will come into force.

Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate that the Department of Education provides regular progress reports on the development of its Language of Instruction Regulations and curriculum.

However, we also need teachers who can speak Inuktitut and who can deliver the education programs in the Inuit language at all grade levels.

Mr. Speaker, my statement is nearly complete and I seek unanimous consent to conclude. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are none. Please proceed, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, I do recognize that the Department of Education does provide updates on the progress towards Language of Instruction Regulations and curriculum, but it does not include information on the number of bilingual speaking teachers.

With that being said, I believe it is imperative for our Assembly to push the government to address this issue once again, or it will not be possible to meet these deadlines provided under Part 4 of the *Education Act* and section 8 of the *Inuit Language Protection Act* and we may be forced to pass another amendment to this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will have questions to the minister on this topic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Item 4: Returns to Oral Questions

Return to Oral Question 741 – 6(2): Contracted Positions in the Public Service

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) I am returning to an oral question asked by Mr. Adam Lightstone, Member for Iqaluit-Manirajak, Question No. 741 – 6(2), on February 27, in regard to contracted positions in the public service.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide an answer to a question I took as notice from MLA Adam Lightstone on whether the *Public Service Act* allows non-Government of Nunavut employees to supervise Government of Nunavut employees.

Many of the powers and delegations in the *Public Service Act* that are given to senior managers cannot be given to a contractor. In addition, the Government of Nunavut's Financial Administration Manual states that personal service contracts are not contracts of employment and must not inadvertently establish an employer/employee relationship between the Government of Nunavut and the individual. Personal service contracts must not be used to circumvent the regular recruitment and hiring processes.

While the Government of Nunavut does have contractors retained to perform specific functions, they should not be taking on senior management responsibilities. The Department of Human Resources will continue with all the government departments to ensure these rules are understood and that we do not have contractors fulfilling tasks beyond their authority. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Oral Question 738 – 6(2): Property Taxes

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. I have a return to Oral Question 738 – 6(2), asked by the Member for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet on February 27, 2024, concerning property taxes.

Mr. Speaker, this return is quite detailed. I have filed it with the Clerk for transcribing into the *Hansard* for the public record and for distribution to all members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: My apologies to the members. Item 4 is Returns to Oral Questions. Returns to Oral Questions. Hon. Minister of Human Resources, Ms. Nakashuk.

Return to Oral Question 747 – 6(2): Out-of-Territory Remote Hiring Policy

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me again. (interpretation ends) This is a question asked by Ms. Janet Pitsiulaaq Brewster, Member of Iqaluit-Sinaa, Question No. 747 – 6(2), asked on February 28, 2024, in regard to the Out-of-Territory Remote Hiring Policy.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to supplement an answer to a question from MLA Janet Pitsiulaaq Brewster. The Remote Hiring Policy became operational on March 1, 2024. The Government of Nunavut can now begin to recruit using this policy. To date, no employees have been hired under this policy. This policy is an interim measure to address critical gaps in the provision of critical services to Nunavummiut. Employees hired under this policy will work remotely on a temporary term basis. With the new policy in place, departments have been advised that any previously approved remote arrangements must conclude by August 31, 2024, and the staffing of positions remotely must be in accordance with the new Remote Hiring Policy framework.

Guiding criteria for these positions include professional-level positions, positions that apply a body of highly specialized knowledge, positions that require a professional designation and/or post-graduate degree or a bachelor's degree in a highly specialized field of post-secondary study, positions that are unique to a department, positions that do not supervise staff, positions that are chronically underrepresented by Inuit, are hard to fill, and must be suitable and appropriate for remote work.

*See Appendix for full text of Return to Oral Question 738 – 6(2).

Reasons why a position may not be suitable include providing regular in-person services to clients, positions that require regular access to government facilities, equipment, or records. A position is not suitable if it is required to maintain physical copies of confidential documents or protected private information. The positions cannot engage Nunavut-based stakeholder groups on a regular basis and cannot allow the government to incur substantial costs by being located outside of the territory.

The Department of Human Resources has actively increased its recruiting activities on social media and has participated in career fairs in communities which have a high population of Inuit. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Item 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Member for Pangnirtung, Ms. Nakashuk.

Item 5: Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the graduates of the Hivuliqtikhat Emerging Leaders Cohort 9 Leadership Program that were in Iqaluit last week and completing their final module. The graduates are all Nunavut Inuit from 11 departments and corporations.

I would like to acknowledge the following graduates who are present: Lena Duggan, Jody Palluq, Ineak Ipeelie, and Leesa Ikkidluak.

I would also like to recognize students who are unable to be here: Lillian Aglukark-Lundrigan, Joanna Kailek, Darlene Metuituk, Russell Akeeagok, Kevin Sudlovenick, Herbert Bolt, Sandra Carter, Mavis Ell, Andrea Phillips, Bobbie Isnor, Mila Kamingoak, Monica Mala, Norma Jean Kablutsiak, April Wadland, Janice Simailak, Deanna Ishulutak, and Kathy Idlout.

And finally, the staff of the Department of Human Resources: Mary Taukie and Michel Rheault, and our deputy minister, Kristie Cronin.

Our government is committed to Pilimmaksarniq, providing education and training to Government of Nunavut employees. Since 2015, a total of 312 Government of Nunavut employees have graduated, 67 percent of who are Nunavut Inuit. Congratulations to all and I would ask that everyone celebrate with me and recognizing the graduates.

>> *Applause*

Speaker: Welcome to your Assembly and congratulations to the graduates. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize some friends in the gallery: Leesa Ikkidluak, who promised not to pick me up and swing me around

because she thought she would get kicked out of the House; Mary Taukie as well. (interpretation) Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome my friend, Michel Rheault. (interpretation ends) *Merci*, Mr. Speaker.

>>*Applause*

Speaker: Welcome to your Assembly. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Item 6. Oral Questions.

Before we start oral questions, I acknowledge that Minister Main is now in the House.

>>*Applause*

Oral Questions. Member for Netsilik, Mr. Quqqiaq.

Item 6: Oral Questions

Question 781 – 6(2): Legal Services Board Activities in the Kitikmeot Region

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Justice and they concern the issue of the Legal Services Board of Nunavut's activities in the Kitikmeot region.

Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, in March 2022 a fire destroyed the Government of Nunavut leased office building in Gjoa Haven. The building housed a number of essential services, including the Legal Services Board headquarters.

Mr. Speaker, as you also know, the fire displaced a number of Legal Services Board employees. The Minister of Community and Government Services previously indicated that a new lease has been signed to house the Government of Nunavut's offices that were impacted by this fire.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Legal Services Board for its continued efforts to ensure that the Kitikmeot region still has access to legal services.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that the Legal Services Board headquarters is one of the entities that are now placed in the Government of Nunavut's recently leased office space? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Justice, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You and I can agree that is a wonderful question that's coming from the member and yes, I want to confirm that the LSB has secured space in Gjoa Haven. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister, for your response. Mr. Speaker, information provided by the minister indicates that a total of “five Government of Nunavut positions are allocated to the Legal Services Board Headquarters in Gjoa Haven.”

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that securing staff housing for the Legal Services Board employees has been an issue in the past.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister clarify what specific actions his department is currently undertaking to secure housing in Gjoa Haven for the Legal Services Board employees? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Justice, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of positions that we have done the paperwork ready and are awaiting for staff housing to be actioned before we advertise them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe it is very important that there be a strong Legal Services Board presence in the Kitikmeot region to serve all communities, including Kugaaruk and Taloyoak.

Mr. Speaker, the Legal Services Board’s mandate indicates that one of its priorities is to “increase knowledge of the law, legal processes, the administration of justice, and to provide public education and outreach with respect to human rights.”

Mr. Speaker, I am aware of a number of situations where constituents would benefit from access to advice and professional guidance for complex and challenging situations.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister clarify what specific actions that the Legal Services Board is undertaking to enhance public knowledge and education of the law in the Kitikmeot region? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Justice, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I commend the Legal Services Board. That’s an arm’s-length entity. They have done wonderful work throughout the territory, including the Kitikmeot, and that’s something that they continue to thrive and something that I continue to support for them to continue. Both of them, along with our Community Justice Division, had been working to trying getting public engagement and that work is done. It is getting done.

I also want to celebrate that in the Cambridge Bay office, we have a full-time lawyer now that's an Inuk from the Kitikmeot. These are baby steps, but they are good steps that are taking place in the Kitikmeot region and I applaud the Legal Services Board for doing that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 782 – 6(2): Inuktitut-speaking Teachers

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned during my member's statement, my questions today are for the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, I addressed the need for our government to ensure that there are sufficient Inuktitut-speaking teachers in our schools in order to deliver Inuit language of instruction.

Mr. Speaker, I do recognize that the Department of Education does provide detailed reports on the progress made towards developing curriculum and curriculum resource development. However, these progress reports do not include information with regard to the number of Inuktitut-speaking bilingual teachers.

I would like to ask: can the minister describe what targets have been established with respect to the recruitment and retention of Inuktitut-speaking teachers in order to meet the first legislated deadline of providing Inuktitut as a first language in grade 4 in all schools by 2026? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. The Department of Education is very committed to increasing the number of Inuktitut-speaking teachers within our schools, and we have partnered with Nunavut Arctic College to foresee that more teachers are being trained through the Nunavut Teacher Education Program. We are very promised on the number of students that are in the program at the moment and we are very intentional on our hiring of those students from that program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the minister's response and collaboration and partnership with Nunavut Arctic College to train and hire more Inuktitut-speaking teachers, but I guess I'll rephrase my question. As the first legislated timeline states that all schools must provide Inuktitut as first language of instruction up to grade 4 by 2026, two years from now, what targets have been established to meet this legislated timeline and is the department on track to meeting this objective? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. The Department of Education is currently reviewing the language of instruction models and we have done community consultations to 22 communities and the remaining three will be consulted this month. There will be a second round of consultations of the language of instruction models.

We're working to update the Language of Instruction Regulations as well so that we can complete the full review of the language of instruction models used in our schools. At this point, we are ensuring that we have mechanisms in place to review the language of instruction models and that we are on track with curriculum development, as well as that it's a key component to ensuring that we have Inuktitut in our schools from kindergarten to grade 12. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I noted in the information that I tabled last week, the average number of Inuktitut-speaking teachers in all of our 45 schools is 29 percent. However, a majority of our schools are below this mark and in addition, there are five schools which only have one or two Inuktitut-speaking bilingual teachers, representing less than 10 percent. Further, there are four schools with zero Inuktitut-speaking teachers.

Mr. Speaker, here in Iqaluit where we are one of the communities that are unfortunately suffering from language loss, of our 134 teaching positions, we have 23 Inuktitut-speaking bilingual teachers, or 17 percent.

With those facts being highlighted, has the department recognized that there are significant areas that require a more strategic approach in order to achieve the legislated timelines to provide language of instruction in Inuktitut? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you once again to the member for the question. Currently, we use the language allowance for our teachers based on levels 1, 2, and 3 and those are the numbers that we reflected in the numbers for the number of teachers who speak Inuktitut, but we do highly encourage teachers... . They may not be receiving the bonus at this point. We do highly encourage them to apply and get assessed with the Nunavut Teachers Association so that we can further have more accurate numbers to that.

The Department of Education is also working on an Inuit-specific recruitment strategy which I hope will also increase the number of Inuit teachers that will become recruited and work in the department as teachers. I would like to also highlight that we currently have people that are working employees that have been in the schools and are taking the Sivuliqtiksat Internship Program as well as other training opportunities, working in our schools to directly become trained.

I encourage those that might be listening, if they would like to become a teacher, that there are great employment opportunity programs available and are offered in our communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Baker Lake, Mr. Simailak.

Question 783 – 6(2): Mine Training Strategy

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning and good morning to the people of Baker Lake and good day wishes to you.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Economic Development and Transportation mentioned a minister's statement last week on the Mine Training Strategy. "...there is huge potential for Nunavummiut to close the gap in mine-related jobs," and it goes on further down.

"Mr. Speaker, we have worked closely with the Department of Family Services and Nunavut Arctic College...to develop the Nunavut Mine Training Strategy. Our aim is to increase awareness and access to mine training programs..."

Mr. Speaker, this morning my questions are for the Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the minister can speak to what extent that Nunavut Arctic College took part in this Mine Training Strategy, if he can speak to it. Are they offering college-based [programs] in their classrooms or developing curricula? If the minister can speak to that a bit, please. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, Nunavut Arctic College is excited that the Nunavut Mine Training Strategy is now public and we do recognize the importance of mine training for the territory's economy.

There are some priorities within the whole of government that we are working towards in providing mine training in areas and communities that have current mines. It is an approach that Nunavut Arctic College is creating to provide awareness within the K to 12 schools and also awareness in career fairs, awareness in advancement opportunities, and there are benefits for the pathways to access these opportunities.

We're not alone on this Mine Training Strategy. We have Economic Development and Transportation and also the Department of Family Services that will have more strategies for mine training opportunities in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering: is Nunavut Arctic College now planning to expand mine-related training programs to outlying communities so that constituents can begin training in their home communities? Is that what was borne from this Mine Training Strategy that's being worked on? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nunavut Arctic College recognizes the multiple demands for training and education opportunities across the territory. Acting on calls for program development and delivery requires dedicated financial support, human resources, and capital within communities.

Currently, the mine training centre is the focus to build phase 2 of the trade school in Rankin Inlet and the college continues to work with Community and Government Services for this important mine training centre that will be in development in the coming years.

I do recognize that there will be opportunities for other communities outside of Rankin Inlet that will need to be implemented by the government once we identify more financial support. That comes with finding instructors for the Mine Training Strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister, for your response. It sounds to me like the key priority focus right now is the regional facilities, but I did hear the part where he mentioned that they're looking at expanding to other communities if they can find funding or instructors. I'm wondering: when can my constituents in Baker Lake expect to see mine-related courses being offered at home so that my constituents can stay home and begin courses?

There are federal funding programs that are available and I'm sure there are other instructors that can be sought. I mentioned in this House before that Peter's Expediting Ltd. did find federal funding on their own, so there are partners out there that can help make this happen. I'm wondering: when can my constituents expect to see some mine-related courses being offered in Baker Lake? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his continuance of mine employment opportunities for his community. There is an Agnico Eagle mine very close to the Baker Lake community.

Currently, our college has a chair and Industry Trades Division where we have three coordinators from each region. They are based in Pond Inlet, Rankin Inlet, and Cambridge Bay, but Pond Inlet and Cambridge Bay communities are currently vacant.

These are crucial coordinators that will identify mine training opportunities in communities. Once those vacancies are filled, they can work towards reaching out to the mining companies. They work closely with the mining sector to identify, plan, delivery, and various training opportunities throughout the territory.

Nunavut Arctic College does not have base funding to provide mine training at this time and we would need our college to find proposals or contribution agreements to provide mine training in any community. At this time, for the member's questions for Baker Lake, when training will be provided to the community, we do have the Heavy Equipment Operator Program where the college teaches heavy equipment operations and those are also areas we're trying to work towards. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oral Questions. Member for Aggu, Ms. Quassa.

Question 784 – 6(2): Preparing for Health Outbreaks

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say “good morning” to Nunavummiut and my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, the spread of measles across Canada is a top story in the media these days. It seems to be developing into a serious concern.

Can the minister provide an update on whether there has been an increase in the number of measles cases being reported in Nunavut? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank my fellow MLA for asking that question. Mr. Speaker, I concur with that assessment of this disconcerting matter voiced by our colleague, as portrayed by the mainstream media, as it is a hot topic.

At this current time, we have not been informed of any cases in Nunavut, at least to my knowledge. The chief medical officer would make a public announcement and would have to report this emergence if any cases were found in any part of Nunavut. To reiterate in English, it is a (interpretation ends) reportable disease. (interpretation) There would have to be an announcement and a report provided in this case.

This discussion is a good reminder to ensure we keep an eye on this in my view, and to remind our residents about prior vaccination shots or (interpretation ends) immunizations (interpretation) and their efficiency in providing immunity against this disease, especially with relation to our young children who haven't received this immunization throughout Nunavut.

Based on the information provided to me, Mr. Speaker, any person who received an immunization shot in their youth are immune, but the younger generations may be a concern as it was considered eradicated but seems to be coming back. It's a good reminder to ensure that everyone without previous immunization ought to receive measles vaccinations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also appreciate the minister's response to this matter by providing more information, and we must provide further public announcements to ensure the general public receives this pertinent evidence so that nobody is infected by this disease.

(interpretation ends) Mr. Speaker, I recognize that outbreaks of such illnesses as flu, COVID, whooping cough, measles, chickenpox, and other viruses are always a possibility, especially as more people travel outside of their communities.

Can the minister describe what specific measures are in place to help prevent the spread of such viruses as measles and what steps his department is taking to promote such preventative measures as vaccinations and health awareness campaigns? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) If there was a case of measles in Nunavut, the response would be directed through the chief public health officer's office, and that would be in terms of whether public health measures are needed, whether there's contact tracing that needs to happen, I have every confidence in the excellent staff working in that office.

In terms of the importance of vaccines, Mr. Speaker, it's a multi-pronged effort. We are continually looking to encourage and support Nunavummiut who want to get vaccinated. There are currently 14 publicly-funded vaccines that we administer in the territory; they cover all kinds of illnesses or diseases. Our current efforts to increase vaccine coverage include work being done by public health nurses and community health nurses to track individuals need to immunizations using Excel spreadsheets.

We also hold well child clinic days specifically for immunization at health centres. We aim to follow up on appointments and rebook those, and we also have immunization fact sheets available in all four official languages, and there are also our community health representatives that play a role in increasing awareness. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Second and final supplementary, Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for the response. (interpretation ends) In reading the news about the spread of measles across Canada, I wondered how long it would be before Nunavut would be impacted. Our experience with the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that we can never be too well prepared for an outbreak. As an illness spreads across the country in the south, there is a strong possibility that it will eventually make its way up north.

Can the minister update this House on what kinds of changes has been made to Health's pandemic preparedness plan since the COVID-19 pandemic to better address outbreaks of such viral illnesses as measles? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) Thank the member for the question. Health is currently in the middle of an exercise to do exactly what the member was asking in terms of updating our pandemic preparedness plan, learning the important lessons from the very exceptional and difficult times dealing with COVID.

One of the things that were learned is the importance of immunization registry and I'm happy to report that we are moving towards the development of that immunization registry.

In terms of additional changes to the pandemic preparedness plan, I can't speak to much detail yet, but we are in the middle of an exercise examining the COVID response, what was learned, what worked, what didn't and how we can be prepared for the next pandemic. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 785 – 6(2): Status of Vacant Positions in Arviat

Mr. Savikataaq (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to the people of Arviat.

(interpretation ends) I would like to question the Minister of Environment.

I would like an update from the minister on the three positions in Arviat that I asked about back in the fall, the manager position, wildlife deterrence specialist position and the environment protection officer. These were all vacant and they were at different stages of hiring and I would like to remind the minister of his reply on October 19, 2023.

When I asked about these positions being filled in Arviat by a person sitting on a desk in Arviat not done remotely, the minister responded, "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All three positions mentioned are not specialist positions and therefore will not be filled remotely."

I would like an update on each one of those positions and what stage of employment process they're at now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Question to CGS? Hon. Minister, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The three positions that the member questioned during the last fall sitting, Arviat Kivalliq regional manager is still vacant, but working with staffing to have reposted.

For the wildlife deterrent specialist, it is still vacant reviewing job description prior to submitting to staffing and requesting housing allocation.

For the environmental protection officer for Arviat, that position is currently filled through casual staffing action that is based in Rankin Inlet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: First supplementary, Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm confused with the minister. The minister clearly stated these positions would be in Arviat, and now the minister stated that the environment protection officer filled casually in Rankin Inlet. Rankin Inlet is not in Arviat.

I would like an explanation on why is not that job filled casually in Arviat where the position is located and where the minister assured this House that none of these positions would be filled remotely? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Environment, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. The question is very operational and detailed. In terms of why the position is currently filled remotely is something my department and I can work towards providing the answer to the member at a later time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Second and final supplementary, Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Looking forward to that information as the minister on October 19 clearly stated that none of these three positions, the manager, the wildlife deterrence specialist, and the environmental protection officer, who are stationed in Arviat, would not be filled remotely. The minister stated that in the House, but apparently now the environment protection officer is being filled casually remotely in Rankin Inlet.

Can I get reassurance again to the minister that these three positions will be filled in Arviat when they are filled with a person sitting on a desk in Arviat and not doing their work remotely? The minister has told me October 19 that that is the minister's position.

Can I just get confirmation that that is still the minister's positions that these jobs will be filled by a person living and working in Arviat? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Environment, Mr. Qavvik.

Hon. Daniel Qavvik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was a very new minister during that time, and I'm still learning as of today. When we were exchanging our question period and answering, I did provide that there was no housing available for the current environmental protection officer's position. At this time, we cannot commit to when there is no housing available for the position in the community of Arviat, but we are still waiting for the environmental protection officer position to make it on the housing list. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 786 – 6(2): Homeownership Programs

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good late morning, people of Nunavut, Clyde River and Qikiqtarjuaq. I would like to welcome the people who just entered the House.

I would like to ask my questions on the topic of homeownership to the Minister responsible for Nunavut Housing Corporation. I want to follow-up today on the issue of support for Nunavut homeowners, especially the elders.

(interpretation ends) The Nunavut Housing Corporation currently administers no fewer than 10 different programs to support homeowners. I have raised this concern about the need to simplify the application process, especially for the homeowners in smaller communities like Qikiqtarjuaq and Clyde River. Information published by Nunavut Housing Corporation indicates that it is "Currently in the process of developing a new homeownership support policy and the introduction of the new and redesigned homeownership program."

Can the minister indicate if a number of different homeownership support programs will increase or decrease or remain the same? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Nunavut Housing Corporation, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): I would like to thank the member for asking that question. We are currently reviewing the process of developing new homeownership support policy because there are emergency cases where there might be broken windows or a leaking fuel tank and there are different pots of money made available to those homeowners.

We're trying to simplify the process and it will probably give them new titles so that they'll be easier to access. We are currently working on them, I don't know if there's

going to be an increase or a decrease or remain the same, but there will be no cutting of programs that are being made available to homeowners. We're trying to simplify the process at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: First supplementary, Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the member for his response and to simplify the process. During the recent fall 2023 sitting of the Legislative Assembly, we approved the Nunavut Housing Corporation's \$4,620,000 budget for homeownership support programs for the upcoming 2024-25 fiscal year.

Can the minister indicate if the Nunavut Housing Corporation's budget for its new homeownership support policy and new homeownership support programs will increase, decrease or remain the same? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very glad that you brought up this question. We have had meetings with the Regular Members' Caucus, and there are some programs that are being utilized more than others, and there's pots of money that deplete and there's some monies that have remaining amount of dollars. We're currently looking at all those and re-profiling some of the dollars.

Usually, there's a limit on the amount of money you make, and some are too low. Some individuals seem to be making a lot of money, but then again, they can't cover some of the operational side of their house. We would like to make sure that funds are available to everyone, especially in an emergency situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Second and final supplementary, Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good information we hear. Earlier this week, I spoke about the exciting pilot project that the Qikiqtarjuaq Housing Association and the Inuksuit School have started to encourage young people to become skilled tradespeople.

(interpretation ends) One of the concerns that I hear from my constituents about the Nunavut Housing Corporation's homeownership programs is the difficulty in assessing skilled tradespeople to perform repairs and renovations and the difficulty in accessing good quality materials for these projects.

Can the minister indicate how the corporation's new homeownership program support policy will address these issues? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate this line of questioning. We do realize that there are home owners in communities where there are no maintenance personnel to maintain the private home's boilers or furnaces and/or repair their windows and doors.

One of the things that our housing corporation is looking at is to see if we might now be able to solve some of these very important issues by way of, I'll use an example, Mr. Speaker, is to maybe put out at request for proposal to see if there's a contract or contractors that might be interested in going to a number of isolated communities and dealing with some of the home maintenance issues such as repairing their boilers and/or replacing windows and/or using the local housing association staff to do some of that work. We're trying to figure out the best ways to deal with those which are very noticeable in communities where there are shortages of tradespeople. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 787 – 6(2): Long-term Care Facility in Rankin Inlet

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Community and Government Services again.

Mr. Speaker, we're going on day 4 now and I would like to just make a comment that "open and transparent" isn't just a catchphrase. Mr. Speaker, it shouldn't take three days to get an update on a piece of important infrastructure with the long-term care facility in Rankin Inlet.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister acknowledged that the contractor is currently under receivership. Most people are aware that there is a bond that's deposited with most large infrastructure contracts and it has been stated that this project is anticipated to remain on budget. I would like to get the minister's position on his comfort level with the bond amount being sufficient to complete this project next month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. David Joanasie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member pressing on this matter for the third or fourth day now.

Mr. Speaker, this again is an unusual situation where, when a company goes into receivership, the Government of Nunavut does have options to choose from. With that, the current option that we have gone through is to put the company in default and rely on the bonding company to step in, which is what has happened here. This is by far the best outcome for cost and schedule. As for the cost for the total budget of this project, we continue to make sure that we take the appropriate steps to minimize and mitigate any financial impacts going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the other questions I asked in one of the previous three days was the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program provided \$25 million towards this project. Has that \$25 million been received? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Community and Government Services, Mr. Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister Fraser came to Nunavut to announce this and that would mean that the contribution agreement had been signed and there's funding that will come through to Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the \$25 million, it was mentioned by the minister in one of our previous exchanges that the Department of Health had come forward with... . Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I'm quoting from the *Blues* here. With the ability to secure the \$25 million towards that project, the minister said, "In doing so, the monies that the Department of Health had come forward with, we can redirect those funds to other potential capital projects that are in our plans or that we are trying to advance into construction."

Mr. Speaker, the minister may want to have a chat with his colleague, the Minister of Finance, on how appropriations work in this House. Monies that were appropriated for that specific project have to go back to this House for redistribution to other capital plans. The department cannot unilaterally make the decision to reallocate funds that haven't been approved in this House to a specific project. I would just like to get the minister's position on what he meant by having the ability to be able to redirect those funds to other potential capital projects. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Community and Government Services, Mr. Joanasié.

Hon. David Joanasié: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. To clarify on that, we do have a process in place for capital funds to be directed for and in consultation with the Minister of Finance, any financial decision of a capital project that we're proceeding with, in this case, there are additional funds, \$25 million, to that amount, it has to go through that process of the Financial Management Board making the decision on where to spend those funds. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 788 – 6(2): Children in Care

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to follow up on some questions that were posed by Member Lightstone yesterday to the Minister of Family Services.

Mr. Speaker, there was an important question right at the outset regarding whether or not there is a reporting mechanism for kids in care. The minister responded that there are client liaison officers that people could make use of. The minister has also publicly committed to ensuring that history is not repeated related to the issues of concern of children in the care of family services in the territory and out.

Just for clarity, can the minister give us an email address, a toll-free number, or a web address to a complaint form that any member of the public who is a guardian of or who has a family member or a friend in care can use in order to bring a complaint forward about the care that they're receiving. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Family Services, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for that question. (interpretation ends) I do appreciate the question you're bringing. I was talking about how we work with outside clients or the client liaison officers. The reporting system is usually to work directly with the director that could be located right here in Iqaluit at the headquarters office, and I have to mention that it's going to take time for things to change. Like I had stated, with the framework that we just put out recently, we are trying to work towards improving a lot of the services that we provide, especially for children in care outside of the territory.

In terms of how we can better provide toll-free numbers, I could certainly get back to the member on the details of that. As I had stated, we are working directly with most of our staff to ensure that they work directly with the clients in care. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I still don't have what I'm aiming for, which is a number that any citizen can call if they have a complaint today. Mr. Speaker, it's really important to be able to provide that information because often, when people feel that clients in care are in any danger or are receiving substandard care, we want to act on it immediately. I would encourage the minister to get a number out there as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the minister: what are the standards and protocols for review and response to concerns and complaints? Can the minister tell us: is there a complaints policy and procedure for employees to follow and importantly, for the public to follow? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Family Services, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for that question. (interpretation ends) When we're talking about kids in care outside of the territory, I understand that they also have close communication with the family members.

When we're talking about how they can better contact our offices, we have social workers in each of the communities throughout Nunavut, so that's another way of contacting the social workers at a local level. Also, like I had mentioned, we work directly with contractors or children in care. The client liaison officers have direct contact with the headquarters office, so there is always communication going through.

We are continuing to improve our incident reporting framework that we're working on. That's being monitored. That's something that we are trying to improve on, as well as like I had mentioned, the OAG report. There is a lot of work that we need to do to improve the programs and services that we offer.

Like I stated with the strategic framework that we're working on, there are a lot of things on the go, not just communication-wise but how we can better enter into the data system that we're working on to improve our communication and reporting system. There are different ways that the department is doing and not just in one area of work.

(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I heard an answer in there related to an incident reporting framework and I'm still not clear about whether or not that's available to the public and whether or not it outlines standards and procedures that they can refer to in making a complaint.

Mr. Speaker, the minister just now referred to the framework and I'm assuming that's the framework for action that was tabled. Can the minister tell us when a strategic plan will be developed and tabled? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Family Services, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I outlined how further our office may be notified of a concern. The clients outside of Nunavut work with our staff and they have a director to that end. The director also notifies our headquarters office here in Iqaluit.

Just last week, we gave a document on what improvements are to be made, what changes will be made, and what further work will be needed, particularly towards clients under the Department of Family Services. The Office of the Auditor General's report and the plans that ensued and what progress had been made in our plans are something we are continually monitoring if there are any things that need to be rectified. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 789 – 6(2): Cannabis Reduction Program

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, earlier during the sitting, the minister provided a minister's statement on Tobacco Reduction Month. Of course, I do appreciate the minister and the Department of Health's role with regard to the Tobacco and Cannabis Reduction Program, but it seems like a majority of the emphasis is placed on the harm of tobacco and efforts to reduce tobacco in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken on numerous occasions in this House about the risks of cannabis use on a developing brain. I would like to ask the minister: with regard to this tobacco and cannabis program, what sort of emphasis has been placed specifically on cannabis? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the member for that question. (interpretation ends) The work on cannabis since the legalization has been bringing it into our existing tobacco reduction programs. We have seen an addition of that material and expansion of different types of resources.

Instead of just calling it tobacco reduction program, it's the Tobacco and Cannabis Program. We are currently working on staffing in terms of those activities. We currently have five person years within the Tobacco and Cannabis Program. Two of those positions are filled, which are the cannabis program coordinator and the Tobacco and Cannabis Program analyst. We're currently looking to put out ways to fill those other three positions.

Mr. Speaker, the member makes an important point in terms of how important it is to keep youth from using cannabis. It has been shown to be harmful. It can lead to mental health issues later in life. A lot of our focus right now is around awareness and education. We have a strong footprint on social media and that's one thing that is helping us to get the messaging out there in terms of telling youth to avoid using the substance. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have heard some very dramatic radio advertisements on local radio informing the public about the harmful impact that second-hand smoke has on children's lungs. I think this is a very strong message to get the awareness and education out there. I would like to ask the minister to commit to having a similar, very strongly worded education and awareness radio broadcast being advertised on our local radios specifically with regard to harmful impacts of cannabis on children. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank the member. (interpretation ends) We are using mass media currently. We are sharing our messaging around tobacco prevention. I will admit that in terms of the cannabis prevention or cannabis use information, we are still building up our resources there, so it might be a little bit less developed.

In terms of committing to specific radio ads being put out around cannabis, I'm not going to commit to that today. I think that would be getting way down into the weeds, so to speak as minister, but I can commit to working with my staff to make sure that they are using mass media to the best extent possible, specifically on our cannabis program messaging. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Radio is an excellent targeted initiative to reach out, which is why I think that utilizing radio advertising to spread awareness and education about the harmful impacts cannabis has on youth's brains is imperative to inform adults. I really hope that the minister will have some positive discussions with his officials in this area.

I do recognize the Department of Health's efforts in utilizing social media as well as Facebook with regard to their tobacco reduction campaigns. Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe that such targeted initiatives through social media is the best way to connect with our youth.

Mr. Speaker, in the '90s there was a very strong advertisement campaign about the impact of drugs on your brain, and these were video advertisements that were put on commercials across Canada and there was very strong imaging incorporated into those commercials about your brain on drugs, very strong images such as breaking an egg into a frying pan or clipping wires that were in the form of a brain.

I would like to further request the minister to consider or even commit to creating such video social media campaigns to spread the awareness about the harmful effects of cannabis on the developing brain on social media to target youth so that they can be informed equally. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Health, Mr. Main.

Hon. John Main (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for that question. (interpretation ends) In terms of the use of video or the use of mass media, we absolutely want to be engaging with youth and with Nunavummiut and meet them where they're at, basically. If they're on Facebook, we want to be on Facebook. I'll add that that's an approach that the department wants to take with programs beyond tobacco and

cannabis reduction. We want to have an increased social media presence for many different programs.

In terms of the member's request, I can certainly take that suggestion back and have a discussion around the use of mass media and the use of video in terms of communicating the harms of cannabis. We are seeing the impacts of cannabis use in terms of the mental health clients that we do receive. Many different issues can be combined in one patient, or one Nunavummiuq can be affected by many different health issues, but it's not uncommon to see cannabis use or cannabis addiction as part of one of the factors that can lead to serious mental health issues or contribute to other illnesses. It is something we are committed to helping to educate Nunavummiut around. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 790 – 6(2): Update on Bill 55 Court Procedures

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance's return to oral on property taxes squeezed my interest a bit. In his last statement, there was the property tax on Nunavut's four major mines. It was at \$307,000. I would like to ask the Minister of Justice on Bill 55.

On August 11, 2022, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated legally challenged Bill 55, which is the *Property Assessment and Taxation Act*, where the landowners on Inuit-owned land would have to collect the property tax. I just want an update on the legal proceedings. I know that we can't talk about the legal stuff, but has there been a court date set or just an update on it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Justice, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking through my information, trying to get information as fast as possible in terms of the progress of the courts. It is before the courts and it is in their timeline. If I do have that particular information in terms of where it is at, I'll be happy to share that with the member, but at this time, I don't have that specific date. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Savikataaq.

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like the commitment from the Minister of Justice saying that he will get back to this House on the court date of that proceeding if there is one or what state it's at before the end of this winter sitting. Can I get that assurance or commitment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Justice, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will provide the commitment right now. There is a three-day hearing being planned in September 2024 between the parties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That bill was passed and the House approved this bill and we're all behind it. I just wanted to get the minister's position to make assurance that the Department of Justice is fully behind this bill and will defend the contents and the purpose of this bill when the court date is made and when they represent them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Justice, Mr. David Akeeagok.

Hon. David Akeeagok: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The whole reason why this is before a court is because one party does not like what the Legislative Assembly has passed. This was passed by this Legislative Assembly and work is underway to ensure the passage and those regulations are in place. I have my ministerial colleague working specifically on those.

In terms of the court itself, that's a judicial part that looks at our legislations and the parties that attest to it and to try to find that balance. That's happening right now and that's before a judge. We are relying on the judge to make an interpretation of what the two parties have brought forward and that's going to continue in terms of getting the relevant information, going back and forth, where the courts will determine. Whatever the courts will determine and if they find it one way or another and it has to go to the House, we will have to go back to the House.

As it stands now, our government is firm that what was passed here is before the courts right now and that stands. There have been no attempts from our government to make any changes towards that legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 791 – 6(2): Accounting for Surplus on Capital Projects

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask how a surplus is accounted for a completed infrastructure project if there is money left over after the project is complete. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a rare occasion where there would be a surplus, it would come back to our department and we would look at putting it into our general revenue, Mr. Speaker, the way I understand it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the recent Budget Address, the minister stated what the deficit is anticipated for this fiscal year. Was that number taken into consideration, given the fact that \$25 million was received through the Rankin Inlet Long-term Care Centre project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Finance, Mr. Kusugak.

Hon. Lorne Kusugak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll have to confirm that, but I believe it does. I will have to just confirm that with the officials in terms of what kind of details they are with that announcement and where it works in with our current estimates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 792 – 6(2): Direct Appointments

Ms. Brewster: Thank you for recognizing me a second time today, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Human Resources and they concern the statement that she made yesterday concerning “expedited” direct appointments to positions in the territorial public service.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's statement was quite short in length, so I am happy to provide her with the opportunity today to unpack it together with me.

In her statement, the minister indicated that 106 Inuit were direct appointed to positions in a period of seven months. I am going to make an assumption that the minister is referring to the current 2023-24 fiscal year. If that assumption is wrong, I'll assume that she will correct me in her response.

Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues have spoken passionately about the need for job opportunities to be more equitably distributed between Nunavut communities.

Can the minister clarify how many of the 106 expedited direct appointments were made to headquarters positions and how many were made to positions in decentralized and non-decentralized communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Human Resources, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also thank you for asking that question. (interpretation ends) I really do appreciate the question and I do agree that we do need to do more direct appointments throughout Nunavut.

At this time, I don't have the details as to how many are outside of Iqaluit, in the communities, but we have been working with different departments, trying to find out how many long-term casuals we have that could go into direct appointments. We have been working quite well in trying to get all the information from the communities through the department. I can certainly provide you more information in regard to how many have been from the other communities outside of Iqaluit. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Your first supplementary, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate that response. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, information published in the government's quarterly employment reports indicates that there are approximately 5,500 positions in the Government of Nunavut.

The occupational category with the highest rate of Inuit employment is the "Administrative Support" category. Roughly 85 percent of these positions are filled with Inuit employees. That's almost nine in ten positions.

By contrast, the occupational category with the lowest rate of Inuit employment is the "Senior Management" category. Just 20 percent of these positions are filled with Inuit employees. That's only one in five positions.

Can the minister indicate today how many of the 106 "expedited direct appointments" of Inuit were to management or professional positions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Human Resources, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) That's a very good question. I think, this morning, I approved that. When we have government employees getting into the Hivuliqtiksat programs or other leadership programs, it really proves that we are trying to ensure that Inuit employees are getting the management or director positions they need within their workplace on top of training at the same time. We certainly want to see more of that come through, but in terms of what levels the direct appointments have been appointed to, I will certainly have to get back to the member on that. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we work our way through the main estimates, it is impossible not to notice the significant number of assistant and associate

deputy minister level positions that are currently vacant or are being filled on an acting basis, often by non-Inuit.

Can the minister clarify how many non-Inuit received direct appointments during the 2023-24 fiscal year and will she commit to ensuring that all vacant executive-level positions are first put out for competition before a direct appointment is considered? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Minister of Human Resources, Ms. Nakashuk.

Hon. Margaret Nakashuk (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (interpretation ends) That's a multi-question right there, but I can say that all associate deputy ministers are Inuit. (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Members, be aware that the time allotted for question period is now over. Before we proceed to the next item, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to No. 5, Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery, in our *Orders of the Day*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The member is seeking unanimous consent to go back to Item 5 on the order paper. Are there any nays? There are none. Item 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Ms. Brewster.

Revert to Item 5: Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am so happy to stand today to say “hello” to my neighbour who has moved away, Ooleepeeka Veevee, who we all know as a very important person and media personality, a champion of teaching about good nutrition, which is so important for us. It's so nice to see her back here today and I hope that she will enjoy her visit back home to Iqaluit.

(interpretation) Mr. Speaker, today I would like to welcome my friend to the House, (interpretation ends) Marie Boileau and two of her young nephews as well. Damien Boileau, who is 13, he is named after Elijah Nauyuk. Tristan Boileau is 10 and he is named after Akaka Sataa. They're here from Quebec City during their spring break and I would like say *bienvenue chez quoi*, welcome to your House and enjoy your visit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Welcome to the Assembly. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for getting us back to Item 5. I rise today to recognize my cousin. Her late father and my mother are siblings. I would

like to welcome you. Just recently we had stated that we have not seen you for a long time in Iqaluit and we were wondering when you were going to visit, so welcome back to Nunavut for a visit and meeting your family members. Your aunt is back in the elders' home so that you will know. I was very pleased to see you and that brought me up. Welcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>Applause

Speaker: Welcome to your Assembly. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery. Item 7. Written Questions. Item 8. Returns to Written Questions. Item 9. Replies to Opening Address. Item 10. Replies to Budget Address. Item 11. Petitions. Item 12. Responses to Petitions. Item 13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters. I recognize the Member for Iqaluit-Tasiluk, Mr. Hickes.

Item 13: Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters

Committee Report 027 – 6(2): Presentation of the Report of the Standing Committee on the Review of the 2021-2022 Public Accounts of Nunavut

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present the Report of the Standing Committee on the Review of the 2021-22 Public Accounts of Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts held a televised hearing on the most recently tabled set of Public Accounts on September 21, 2023. The standing committee's hearing was held in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly and was televised live across the territory. Mr. Speaker, the hearing was open to the public and news media to observe from the Visitors' Gallery, and was livestreamed on the Legislative Assembly's website. The transcript from the standing committee's hearing is available on the Legislative Assembly's website.

Mr. Speaker, witnesses appearing before the standing committee included a number of senior officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Government of Nunavut's departments of Finance and Environment. The standing committee notes its appreciation to the witnesses.

Mr. Speaker, the standing committee's report contains six sets of formal recommendations directed to the Government of Nunavut, which cover a number of thematic areas, including:

- Budgetary and financial management transparency, sustainability and flexibility;
- Risks and uncertainties;
- The activities of the Government of Nunavut's Contaminated Sites Liabilities Working Group;

- Future changes in accounting standards; and
- The status of Comptrollership Branch priorities and initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, looking ahead, the standing committee looks forward to holding a televised hearing later in 2024 on the next set of Public Accounts. This hearing is anticipated to allow for detailed consideration of a number of emerging issues and themes, including:

- Results of audits of the Petroleum Products Revolving Fund and the Petroleum Products Stabilization Fund;
- Enhancement of transparency in respect to reporting of territorial tax revenues associated with the natural resources extractive sector;
- Impact of the recently signed *Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement* on reporting of territorial royalty revenues and liabilities in respect to contaminated sites;
- Expansion of the range of electronic formats in which the Government of Nunavut's financial reporting publications and data are made publicly available and achievement of greater alignment of and consistency between figures and formats in the Public Accounts and other publications, including annual reports on grants and contributions expenditures, contracting, procurement and leasing activities; and
- Lapses in respect to departmental grants and contributions budgets.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to note for the record that the standing committee is requesting that the government provide a comprehensive response to this report, pursuant to Rule 91(5) of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut*.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the standing committee be received by the House and entered into the record as read. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The member has moved that the report of the standing committee be received by the House and entered into the record as read. Do members agree?

Some Members: Agreed.

Speaker: It is agreed.

Item 14. Tabling of Documents. Hon. Minister responsible for the Utility Rates Review Council, that's a mouthful this morning, Hon. Premier of Nunavut, Pauloosie Akeegok.

*See Appendix for full text of Committee Report 27 – 6(2).

Item 14: Tabling of Documents**Tabled Document 252 – 6(2): Utility Rates Review Council 2023 Annual Report**

Hon. P.J. Akeegok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table the 2023 Annual Report of the Utility Rates Review Council. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Tabling of Documents. Hon. Minister of Education, Ms. Gross.

Tabled Document 253 – 6(2): Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students Comprehensive Review**Tabled Document 254 – 6(2): Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students Executive Summary**

Hon. Pamela Gross: *Quana*, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table two reports:

- The Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students Comprehensive Review Report; and
- The Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students Comprehensive Review Executive Summary.

Mr. Speaker, the Inuktitut version of the reports will be tabled once the translations are complete. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Item 15. Notices of Motions. Item 16. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills. Item 17. Motions. Item 18. First Reading of Bills. Item 19. Second Reading of Bills. Item 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Bills 37, 38, 39, and 40 with Mr. Hickes in the Chair.

Before we proceed, we will break for lunch and report back at 1:30 p.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House recessed at 11:58 and Committee resumed at 13:29*

Item 20: Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

Mr. Savikataaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We wish to commence with the review of the 2024-25 operations and maintenance main estimates of the Department of Education, followed by the Nunavut Housing Corporation and, if time permits, the Department of Family Services. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Does the committee agree that we first deal with Bill 37?

Some Members: Agreed.

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

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

Hon. Pamela Gross: *Quana*, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I do. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you. Does the committee agree to allow the witnesses to appear before the committee?

Some Members: Agreed.

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

Thank you. For the record, Minister Gross, if you can introduce your officials and then proceed directly into your opening comments. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: *Quana*, Mr. Chairman. Good day, everybody. To my left, to your right, we have Deputy Minister Rebecca Hainnu, and to my right, to your left, we have Director of Corporate Services Ibrahim Suleiman.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to also welcome Bill Cooper to the House. Bill was recently promoted to Assistant Deputy Minister of Education Programs. He has worked for more than 30 years as an educator and I congratulate him on his latest success. I'm sure all of my colleagues look forward to him joining us at the table in the future, and I welcome Bill to this House.

I also want to recognize with us, we have Martine St-Louis, who is the Assistant Deputy Minister for Support Services. Martine has been with the department for many years and has contributed to our Department of Education before we became a territory with the NWT days.

I would also like to recognize and thank Arielle Stockdale, the Director of Policy. Arielle has built a strong team within the department and they are extremely helpful, often going above and beyond for us getting the information that we need to present and prepare for everyone here today. Thank you, Arielle and the team. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

(interpretation) Good day. (interpretation ends) *Quana*, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to appear before you and the standing committee members today to discuss the 2024-25 proposed budget of the Department of Education.

For the 2024-25 fiscal year, our department is requesting a total of \$279,705,000. This represents an increase of \$6,158,000 from the 2023-24 main estimates. Of the \$6,158,000 of new funding, \$3,185,000 relates to funding obligations of the signed collective agreements with the Nunavut Teachers Association and the Nunavut Employees Union. The remaining \$2,973,000 relates to program enhancements. These program enhancements include the following requests.

For 2024-25, the department is requesting \$2,570,000 to meet the increasing costs of busing services in the territory. The operating and maintenance costs for school bus services have increased by \$2,570,000 over the past four years, or 42 percent, from \$6,270,000 in 2020-21 to \$8,846,000 in 2024-25. Since 2020-21, the department has funded those increased costs from within. However, this is no longer feasible, given the requirements to meet other departmental objectives.

The lack of a competitive market for school bus services in Nunavut creates significant cost control challenges. Tender requesting bids for school bus services commonly get one or no bids in response, requiring the department to negotiate a contract with a single potential contractor.

Lastly, the Department of Education requests \$403,000 to meet its legislative obligations to the Commission scolaire francophone du Nunavut to increase its capacity to support École des Trois-Soleils. This additional funding will help fund 2.5 additional positions for the Commission scolaire francophone du Nunavut and support the increase in lease costs related to their new office location. These additional positions will cost the department \$206,000 and additional lease costs will be \$197,000.

Great strides are being made for the education system to expand services and support available to our students, while ensuring that our resources are used to maximum effect. I thank this committee for its continued support of the Department of Education, which enables us to carry out our mandate. Working together, we can provide our students with the resources needed to receive the best educational opportunities available.

I welcome your questions. (interpretation) Thank you.

Chairman: Thank you, Minister Gross. Does the chair of the standing committee have opening comments to provide? Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Chair of the Standing Committee on Social Wellness, I am happy to make opening comments as we begin deliberations on the proposed 2024-25 budget and business plan of the Department of Education.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Education's proposed 2024-25 operations and maintenance budget is \$279.7 million, which represents a 2 percent increase over the budget brought forward for 2023-24. The standing committee notes that just over half of this new funding will again be allocated to wage increases under collective agreements with the Nunavut Teachers Association and the Nunavut Employees Union.

Mr. Chairman, concerns have been raised with respect to the number of Nunavut teachers who may be retiring in the upcoming years and the department's plans to recruit and hire new teachers.

The standing committee encourages the department in its ongoing efforts to work with Nunavut Arctic College in supporting the Nunavut Teacher Education Program and ensuring that its graduates are well prepared for potential employment within Nunavut's education system. In addition to filling teaching positions, having Nunavummiut filling the positions of student support teachers, guidance counsellors, and language specialists will be essential to fulfilling the mandate established under Nunavut's *Education Act*.

During the minister's appearance before the standing committee to discuss her department's draft main estimates and business plan, members were pleased to learn that students in the Nunavut Teacher Education Program have had opportunities to be oriented to the department's new curriculum materials which are being developed to meet legislated Inuit language education requirements. Members fully support the department's efforts to accelerate the development of its Inuit language curriculum materials as concerns have been raised that in some communities, Inuit language use continues to erode.

The standing committee recognizes that filling vacant educator positions will still require hiring teachers from outside of Nunavut, and encourages the department to ensure that the appropriate orientation and training opportunities are made available and completed in a timely manner.

The committee has been given to understand that the department is working to enhance its reporting mechanisms with respect to school operations, including staffing, language of instruction status, parental engagement, attendance, disciplinary issues, and other school activities. Members look forward to reviewing updated information on how this information will be tracked and what key performance indicators will be established to evaluate the success of school programs, policies, and initiatives. The standing committee encourages the department to include the enhanced information in its annual reports.

Members look forward to updates on the activities of the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities, which is established under the *Education Act*. The coalition employs a number of staff and members were given to understand that they work in collaboration with departmental staff to provide guidance and assistance to district education authorities with respect to their roles and responsibilities.

Mr. Chairman, a significant portion of the department's request for additional funds in the upcoming fiscal year will be allocated to school bus services. Members recognize that costs have risen in all areas in recent years and that up until now, the department has managed to fund busing cost increases from unused allocations within its current budget. Members anticipate that policies and standards for school bus services will be updated in the near future and that such information will be made available to all members.

The committee notes that funding is available from a number of different sources to increase the number of daycare spaces in Nunavut's communities as well as to support and enhance the delivery of early childhood programs. Members have been given to understand that the department has made some progress in assisting a number of communities to open new child care facilities this past year, which will be welcome news to parents of young children.

In 2023-24 the Department of Education initiated its pilot project to deliver full-time kindergarten in a number of Nunavut schools. The standing committee looks forward to updates on this initiative and on any plans to expand the full-time kindergarten program to other communities. Members appreciate that implementing full-time kindergarten in additional schools will depend on funding availability to complete the necessary physical renovations to classroom space as well as hiring additional teaching staff and accessing the necessary resources.

The Department of Education manages the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students (FANS) program which supports Nunavummiut who are pursuing post-secondary studies. The standing committee recognizes that the department has been working to improve the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students program, including updating its database, reviewing eligibility guidelines, and enhancing benefits. Members anticipate that any major changes to the program will require legislative amendments to the *Student Financial Assistance Act* and its regulations. Members continue to hear from constituents who experience difficulties in accessing financial assistance for their post-secondary studies.

That concludes my opening remarks. Individual members may also have questions and comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Brewster. Are there any general comments to the opening comments? Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you. Given that Education is one of our larger departments and does actually represent a quarter of the public service, I'm assuming that we will take a number of days to review the budget and we will have a number of different questions, comments, and concerns regarding numerous topics. I would just like to allow an opportunity to give notice on some of the issues that I would like to bring up over the coming days.

So far in this sitting, I have raised concern about the sole sourcing of contracted positions and I would like to continue on that line of topic.

Another issue that I have been raising for a number of years is the need for a standardized universal program. I very much look forward to update on the work between the Department of Education and community partners and any progress made on this initiative.

Another matter that I have raised in the past is the issue surrounding bus safety.

I also note through my review of the procurement activity report that the Department of Education had conducted a forensic audit in the last procurement activity report and I believe it was the 2021-22 fiscal year. There wasn't any other information made about this forensic audit and I do look forward to asking some questions about that.

Lastly, I would like to find out what the department's position is or plans to address the Inuktitut teacher shortage, especially in communities or schools which have one, two, or zero Inuktitut-speaking teachers.

Last, I would like to touch upon the teacher recruitment and retention strategy and the review of educator compensation and benefits and how that can be utilized to address the Inuktitut teacher shortage. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Lightstone. Any other names for general comments to the opening comments? Seeing none, please turn to page G-4. Department of Education. Directorate. Total Operations and Maintenance being requested, \$7,576,000. I'll give members a moment to get to their page. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few questions and the first one will be on the department has been working on improving school food programs across the territory. The draft business plan on page 110 notes that the department leads an interagency group working on this issue. Now the question is: what steps to standardize school food programs are being considered for 2024-25? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the question. This is a great topic that I know we all want to see enhanced and currently there are no school food programs...they're all different in each community. We do get funding from the Department of Health, so each community has their discretion on what type of program that they offer, whether it's hot breakfast and/or lunch or snacks. We also have schools that access funding from outside organizations, particularly with the Inuit Child First Initiative and they run and operate and enhance their school food meal programs through that funding source. Every community is different.

We also don't have healthy food standards, which is something we're working on. I would also like to note that there are currently no positions allocated to school food meal programs at the moment. We are a part of the working group with the Department of Health and the Department of Family Services, along with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, on this particular topic. With the support of this group, we are working to develop a project plan for the creation of a universal school food program for all Nunavut schools. This work is being turned into a business case for federal funding that we're looking to support that program with. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll move on to the next one. Hopefully my colleagues will have follow-up questions to the answer that was just provided from the minister.

I'll move on, Mr. Chairman. The 2021-22 annual report and the *Progress Report on Language of Instruction Regulations and Curriculum 2023* were tabled in November 2023. The question is: how is the department collaborating with its partners to accelerate the plan in the areas of resource development and implementation? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We have a lot of work ahead of us in terms of the review of the 20-Year Language of Instruction Implementation Plan and working to work on the development approach for language of instruction implementation. That is a 20-year plan for curriculum and assessment, also resource development, along with educator training for all the subject areas that are each subject that is out there, and we're working in a four-stage approach for this.

To implement the new curriculum, there are a number of bilingual education stages that we're at for each subject area. For Nunavut, the first stage is curriculum development; the second stage is creation and assessment, evaluation and reporting that aligns with curriculum expectations; the third stage is creation of resources that support learning outcomes; and the fourth stage is the creation and delivery of training to support teachers in the implementation of the new curriculum. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be moving on to the full-day kindergarten program. The department's full-day kindergarten program was piloted in five communities. I'll have a follow-up question after this, Mr. Chairman. Now the question is: when does the department anticipate expanding the program to other communities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the question. We are expanding the full-day kindergarten into seven communities this coming fall, the 2024-25 school year. The communities that were selected to go forward with the next phase for full-day kindergarten include Gjoa Haven, Grise Fiord, Pond Inlet, Qikiqtarjuaq, Resolute Bay, Sanikiluaq, and Taloyoak. *Quana*, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Quqqiaq.

Mr. Quqqiaq: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is great news to hear for Taloyoak being announced for the full-day kindergarten program. It is to my understanding that it will be this fall, if I'm not mistaken. Okay, I've got confirmation that yes, it will be this fall. It's for my constituents' information.

I represent another constituency community which is Kugaaruk. When can we see a full-day kindergarten program coming to Kugaaruk? Now that is my question, Mr. Chairman, and that's my last question on this topic. Thank you.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We don't know yet when Kugaaruk will have full-day kindergarten, but this is a phased rollout, so I can't comment on the exact school year when the community will receive full-day kindergarten.

Hopefully, as we assess the schools going forward, we will know which ones can be allocated next. If the district education authorities also agree to have full-day kindergarten in their community, then we can go forward should the funding be available and be passed in this House, if there are major renovations or expansions that need to take place for the full-day kindergarten, and I suspect that next time just as we did this year.

Last week, we announced which communities were going to implement full-day kindergarten this fall. Hopefully, this time next year we will have another slate of schools that can also be announced. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Next name I have on my list: Mr. Sammurtok.

Mr. Sammurtok (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (interpretation ends) I have a follow-up question regarding the full-day kindergarten program. It was a project of five communities and this fall, there will be another seven communities that are going to get full-day kindergarten. Will these kindergarten programs be fully staffed? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, they will be fully staffed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Sammurtok.

Mr. Sammurtok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The reason I'm asking that is that I have been hearing some closures due to shortage of staff, not for a long period of time, but missing a day here, missing a day there. That's my worry. Will there be more than one staff per community for each kindergarten classroom? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe there are two parts to that, so I'll try to best answer the member's question.

Unfortunately, there are times when we do have to have a closure for a short period of time, sometimes a day or a couple of days, due to illness and/or being short staffed and we're really working hard to ensure that that doesn't happen. However, with the situation with illness, we have just come out of COVID-19 and our communities sometimes are in more vulnerable situations with flu epidemics or different things going around the community that circumvent those types of situations.

I can say that, in terms of the staff, we do have a student-educator ratio and we go based on the number of students in the classroom. For the full-day kindergarten, they will have at least one full-time educator being there all day, depending on the size of the classroom. We might need more than one classroom to support the students being in the school full time versus half days, which our schools see at the moment.

Some of these changes are worked out depending on the size of the class and the students that are coming into the classroom, and we go based on those numbers to determine what and how many teaching positions we need to fully operate and support the full-day kindergarten. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Sammurtok.

Mr. Sammurtok: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The department's draft business plan notes that there was an increase of 21 positions between June 2022 and 2023. How many teaching positions are currently vacant? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the question. In terms of vacancies, I would like just one minute to pull that up.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your patience. In 45 schools that we do have, we have a total of 138.27 unfilled positions. However, I would like to note that a lot of the positions are filled in other means with substitute teachers in filling the jobs there. Thank you. This is under the Nunavut Employees Union. For the Nunavut Teachers Association, we have a total of 810.5 filled Nunavut teacher education positions; there are a total of 523.5 non-Inuit and 287 Inuit. Of the 265 filled Nunavut Employees Union positions, there a total of 249 Inuit and 16 non-Inuit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Sammurtok. Next name I have on my list: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also like to pick up on food program line of questioning. This is going to be a two-part question. Would the minister expand a little

bit on which community partners the Department of Education has been in discussions with, with regard to the food program, and would the minister also provide some more information about the business case that was submitted? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the question. We are working currently on a working group that is with the Department of Health, the Department of Family Services and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and this is a working group to support the application and the business case for funding with the federal that a business case is being developed so it's not submitted yet, but we do look forward to having that submitted.

I can say that I did meet with the previous minister for the Inuit Child First Initiative last year and had a very productive meeting with the minister and we had the understanding and the encouragement to also have positive hopeful response coming from the federal government for this initiative.

Following that, meeting with the federal minister, I met with the President of the Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Aluki Kotierk and we discussed the meeting that I had had, and since then, the department has attended meetings and is very engaged with the discussion on this working group and they do meet very regularly on and to discuss this.

I look forward to the development and the work that's going forward from this business case that will be outlined and presented to the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. It sounds like the department has been very busy on this initiative. I'm glad to hear that a working group has been formed between the Department of Education, Health and Family Services, and most importantly Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated.

Can you further elaborate on how far along the discussions are with the working group?

In regard to the business case, I'd be very much interested to find out how far along that business case is developed and when would be the earliest opportunity that a submission can be made to the federal government? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member once again. This business case is in the preliminary stages of its creation, and the project plan will be turned to seek the federal funding with the Child First Initiative, and the working group is

currently reviewing a proposal for the project plan and expects to have a contract in place this coming winter.

Work is underway, however, it does take some time as we have 45 schools and 25 communities, and we're working on other things in the meantime to enhance this business case, which also is our capital standards for schools and to ensure that we have new commercial sized kitchens to support school food meal programs, as well, we are looking at a tiered approach to meet the various school capacities and their needs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that response minister. It sounds like that this business case is well underway, and you've mentioned the possibility of a contract being awarded this upcoming winter. Is that a contract to finalize the business case, or can you further elaborate if otherwise? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the member is correct; it's a contract to finalize the business case. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the update. I wish everyone participating in the working group success on the development and this initiative, this business case and it sounds like your discussions with the director of the Inuit child first initiative has gone positively as well.

The last question on this specific topic, does the minister feel strongly that the rollout of a standardized school food program will be initiated by the end of this Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. Yes, we are aiming to have a school meal program rollout by the end of this government and it's in our mandate to do so. We're hoping that we can really push forward on this.

After the meeting with the federal ministers last year, they did indicate that there is funds there so hopefully that doesn't change and that the funds will still be available for school food meal programs.

I also advocated for our daycare centres to also be avail of these funds as well so that we can offer nutritious food from the age of 0 all the way to grade 12. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. That is the best news I've heard all day. I'm very excited to hear that as well as the inclusion of our early childhood facilities as well.

I would like to move along to my next line topic, and it's in relation to the Inuit employment within the department. I would like to note that Inuit in the Department of Education are still under represented in acting assignments and transfer assignments within the department. This is an issue that I've been raising for a number of years.

Can the minister provide an update on the reasoning behind the lack of Inuit representation in acting assignments and transfer assignments? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. The rationale is that we have it's a number of teachers with bachelor of education degrees.

However, I can say that we do have hired four Nunavut teacher education graduates this past school year into the Department of Education and we hired a total of 12 Nunavut Teacher Education Program graduates. Some of them graduated from previous years.

We are slowly recruiting those graduates as they come out of the five-year program, and they are from various communities around the territory, and we do work with our regional school operations.

They do know which communities are targets for graduates and they are working to ensure that those graduates are accounted for in the hiring process and will do so if graduates are coming this fall to be hired into a community. They will place somebody if there's a vacancy. They'll maybe put them on for a one-year contract. There's a potential there to hire on new graduates into our schools. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you minister for bringing up NTEP graduates. That was my next line of questioning. I have raised this issue on multiple occasions over the years. The disconnect between Nunavut Arctic College and Department of Education and the fact that not every NTEP graduate is successful in securing a position within the Department of Education.

Over the last few months, has the minister had discussions with Nunavut Arctic College to ensure that all potential graduates for this coming spring will be identified in the event

that they are unable successfully secure a teaching position through the competitive process? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for that question. For the Nunavut Teacher Education Program students, we have heard that brought forward. We have been working with Nunavut Arctic College to ensure that within their practicum timeframe that the students in the program learn résumé writing and also go through an interview process as part of their practicum. They are in the schools for periods of time each school year to work directly with a mentor teacher and to find out what it is like to be teacher in our schools.

They are also working on the new curriculum that is being created and are having some of the first glances and work with that curriculum so that they have the best knowledge when they are going into the field.

I will say Mr. Chairman, that every student that does graduate, we really are advocating for them and look forward to them coming into our schools. We are really excited for them to come out of that program and work directly in our schools, but it is a competitive process and the students do have to go through the hiring committee and prove that they are the best successful candidate. We want to set them up that way and hope that what the member brought forward will help secure all of the students graduating from that program to be hired on as teachers in our schools. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you minister for the response. I'm very glad to hear that the Nunavut Teacher Education Program practicum will include résumé writing and interview preparations. I hope that all Nunavut Arctic College programs will also incorporate interview preparations to ensure graduates are successful.

I'd like to move on to my next line of questioning. In the business plan, one of priorities is to finalize and implement the retention and recruitment strategy for educators with the goal of increasing Inuit and Inuktitut-speaking educators in Nunavut schools.

Earlier today and last week, I did identify concerns that there are number of schools that have a severe shortage of Inuktitut bilingual teachers, including five schools that have one or two teachers that can speak Inuktitut, representing less than 10 percent of the whole school faculty or all the teachers in that school.

Another four schools have zero Inuktitut-speaking teachers. The first question; throughout this, there was finalization and implementation of this teacher recruitment retention strategy, to increase Inuktitut-speaking educators in our schools. Has that issue been identified, the five schools with under 10 percent Inuktitut-speaking teachers and the four schools without any Inuktitut-speaking teachers? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for that question. Yes, that is an area that we are working on. We do want to see Inuit educators in our schools that do speak our language and have them as teachers under the language of instruction regulations.

We're hoping that we will have that support, working directly with executive directors of the regional school operations, to ensure that the best approach we can take to implement the language of instruction in each school. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Mr. Lightstone

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you for that response minister and I do hope that in the upcoming academic school year that we will see some improvement, especially in those four schools without any Inuktitut-speaking teachers.

In the status under that priority, the department has initiated a review of educator compensation and benefits including a cross-jurisdictional scan to best identify practices and compare what is offered to educators in Nunavut.

Would you be able to provide an update specifically on how the strategy and the review of educator compensation and benefits can be utilized to focus on increasing the number of Inuktitut-speaking educators in our schools? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for that question. The department is also completing a review right now, of educator's compensation and benefits to examine our roles of our compensation of recruitment and retention.

We expect this review to be completed this 2024-25 fiscal year and we can inform the Nunavut Teacher Association collective agreement with those negotiations, and we hope that we can develop a formal retention and recruitment strategy, itself, does display capacity issues.

We do hope that we can better streamline our hiring and recruitment and expand our Human Resources division that would include the creation of a manager of recruitment in employee development who could ensure that this holistic approach to recruitment and retention is achieved.

We're also exploring the possibility of further focussing the strategy to be Inuit-specific for the educator action plan.

Also, we are in early discussions right now including the sharing approach with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated for its feedback and support for this educator recruitment strategy.

I can say that this is exciting work and we do hope that we can come forward with more increased salaries for our educators. It would have to go through the appropriate channels of course, but we hope that will provide incentive for recruitment and to know that people are in not only their dream profession, but get fairly compensated as we know our high cost of living in Nunavut is sometimes a contributing factor for people to maybe become educated with their bachelor of education, but might switch to a different career possibly just because the job may pay more and we want our teachers to be paid fairly and to receive the highest quality that they can and to also attract people from the south as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, minister. Before I go to my next name, with the review in the report that Mr. Lightstone was just talking about, would we be able to see a copy of that? Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is not a report that we can share because it will impact the collective bargaining agreement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Noted. Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the Assembly. (interpretation ends) My questions will be in regard to the continue work to accelerate the 20-year language of instruction implementation plan.

In the 2023-24 last bullet of the business plan, you have indicated the development completed a gap analysis and developed an education program enhancement template to align partners collaboration in the development of resources and learning material.

Can you tell me how or who would be developing these learning materials or putting them together they connect with the curriculum? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Quassa. Just for the minister's benefit, that's just on the bottom of page 110 in the business plan. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We currently have the curriculum development office in Arviat, and they work directly on the 20-year implementation plan for the new curriculum that is being created. We also have a contract with Inhabit Education, who is working to produce those materials and we're working directly with them to create the curriculum. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) Because the department has done some analysis, would you be able to tell us how much of a gap there is? Is there a lot of work that needs to be done? Is there different stages let's say different regions that needs to be done to create these materials? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We are at different stages of the curriculum development. Right now we have been focusing on the Kindergarten to Grade 6 curriculum. That development has been completed and is under review at the moment. It will need ministerial approval. The work for curriculum development for grades 7 to 9 has started. Right now, we have some programs that are locally developed courses, as well as curriculum adopted and adapted from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories.

We are working to ensure that that curriculum that is being created is on a timeline and is on par for the spend, which when it started was in 2020 and projected completion in 2039 and we are on schedule with that creation of the curriculum. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) You did already answer some of my questions in regard to anything that is created, how long would it take you to use it as a pilot project to see whether it works or not? For those that the department feels are successful, with this language of instruction, do you think within 20 years that Inuktitut will become quite strong? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the questions. Yes, that's very much our hope that our language, Inuktitut, will be very strong coming out of the creation of this curriculum and we look forward to it being implemented as early as August, 2025 with the kindergarten and grade 1 using the Inuktitut first language curriculum as well as Inuktitut second language curriculum.

As early as next school year that we will start implementing and going forward, we will keep implementing subsequent grades going further as we further progress along with the creation of this curriculum. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, madam minister. I'm very pleased that the Kindergarten Inuit children will be taught Inuktitut, and they will be

speaking Inuktitut and it will become evident that this program is running smoothly and there will be more Inuit speaking Inuktitut and we'll be very proud.

(interpretation ends) I would like to move on to the stakeholder engagement. The draft business plan indicates that funding for the stakeholder engagement division will decrease somewhat in 2024-25.

What key issues are currently being addressed by the different interagency groups that the department works with as well as with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities and the representative for children and youth? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the question. The department recently filled out new position, the director of stakeholder engagement and this has allowed for more formal communication and engagement with our key educator partners and stakeholders.

With that creation of that position, there have been regular meetings between organizations such as the ones the member has referenced, the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities, and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the Nunavut Teachers Association and the representative for children and youth, and that is also for us to improve our communication between the partners and the stakeholders.

Having these regular meetings allows for relationship building and we have also been able to move and progress along in various different work that the department is undergoing at those meetings. Some of the key areas and topics that they discuss and work on are on the language of instruction regulations.

We also have our Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students, the Canadian-wide Early Learning and Childcare Agreement, hiring another school operation, as well as professional development and student support services.

All of those stakeholder meetings are with various partners, they're not all together, but just the ones that are engaged in that discussion are the ones that advocate or have some type of commitment or relationship already, and we look forward to that work going forward to further advance education in Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I certainly hope this plan will go or will include family and parents, after all it is for children and the parents are definitely the ones that would have more ideas and would like to hear more of what is going on within the schools within their community.

Education provides just over \$4 million in contribution funding to the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities. What specific roles and responsibilities does the coalition currently undertake to support Nunavut's education system? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. The funding to support the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities was passed in this House and thankful that we have been able to enhance their working within our school operations. They support the district education authorities and the French school board, and they're there to support the resources they need to meet the requirements under the *Education Act* and they also have training and support to support those organizations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. (interpretation ends) I'm pretty sure you recall last election, there were a number of communities that didn't have very many members within the district education authority. What are the plans for those that may have not enough members within their community or if they have none at all? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. In the cases where our district education authorities do not have quorum due to various reasons such as not enough people putting their names forward or people that might leave the district education authority after their appointment, we go into creating an interim quorum order and we go based on the number that are on the board to have the authority to govern themselves and work to ensure that they're able to support the district education authorities.

The Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities directly supports the district education authorities if they do come into that to work with the Department of Education on those quorum orders and they do come forward, I believe. After this past election last fall, we had nine quorum orders that we had to put in place across our 25 communities. We also have the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities that also helps to recruit members to the district education authorities on the interim to meet their requirements. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister. This is just a comment. Maybe the district education authority should be well advertised in the communities so that they know the roles and responsibilities of the

DEA. It's very likely that they don't submit their names because they don't know that a district education authority does or what its roles and responsibilities are. Education is very important and there are a growing number of responsibilities coming out, and we hope to see well educated people coming out into the workforce.

I do thank your department for recruiting and making adjustments to make sure that everything goes ahead as usual, and also working hard on revitalizing the Inuktitut language. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Just before I go to Ms. Brewster, I would like to elaborate on something that Ms. Quassa just brought up regarding the training and roles and responsibilities of district education authority members.

What type of training actually is provided to Nunavut members of district education authorities specifically on the scope of responsibility? I know that it's been an issue in the past where some DEA members may not fully realize the limits of their responsibility or how much responsibility they actually have, and it can create a confusing scenario for some principals. I would just like to get a little bit deeper into that one if Minister Gross has that information.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for the comments and the questions. Since the 2020 *Education Act* was passed, the Department of Education provides the financial resources through the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities and it is under their responsibility to do the orientation and training for the district education authorities and they have a manual that is being updated and also distributed to new members to further help and support their role and responsibilities in this position that they hold. They have their orientation through the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities.

They work directly with our partner relations unit within the Department of Education for that training and funding that is available and is there to support the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, minister. Again, just to follow-up with that. I understand this is a Coalition of District Education Authorities are responsible to provide the orientation and training. What is the department's perspective on the effectiveness of that orientation and training? Are there zero conflicts between principals and parents and district education authorities, or if there are issues, what are some of the common themes? Minister.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to the question. We have within one of the main themes that are brought up with four district education authorities, are their financial situation and we do provide, every fiscal year, district education authorities with contribution agreements to fulfill various enhancements for their schools.

We do see that there are financial commitments that sometimes are not spent, and we do encourage the district education authorities to expend all of their funds every year to

enhance their school operations, such as hiring our elders in the schools, on the land programming, and other various things in the school that they might come across that they need, such as an attendance officer or other areas they might use for, bussing, and other ways that they could fully meet their needs.

We do work with them to ensure they are spending their money and if there are any issues that do arrive, we have district education authority development officers within the department, and they do work with Coalition of District Education Authorities for various fulfillments of their duties. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Next I have on my list, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I could ask the minister and her witness to please put the laptops little bit further back or turn off their wifi, because I can hear the roaming static through the earpiece.

Mr. Chairman, I did have to step out to solve an urgent problem just as Mr. Lightstone started his line of questions and I know we have some similar topics we'd like to discuss. I hope the minister will understand if I repeat a question that's already been responded to and if I could get a response anyway, that would be great because my questions are leading up to more questions.

I'm interested in talking about the standardized food programs and if the minister could tell us about some of the components of those school food programs, I would really appreciate that because it will lead into some more questions, I believe. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for that. Yes, we did talk about food school program, but I will further discuss. Right now the department is working to standardize and enhance our schools food meal program for each school.

We are currently in a working group with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the Department of Family Services, and the Department of Health. On that, we are working to develop a creation of a universal school food meal program. The project plan for that is to develop a business case which will seek federal funding from the Child-First Initiative, and we have right now, a various school food meal programs.

We do receive funds for each school to deliver some food. It depends on the community what they do offer. Some offer breakfast, some offer lunch, some offer snacks, and some also seek support through the Child-First Initiative to further enhance those food meal programs.

Right now, we're looking to have that business case come forward, the work to begin this coming winter, 2024. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you minister, I appreciate that response. I'm interested in what components are going to be covered, whether or not that standardized program and that business plan will include things like curriculum development for nutrition education, family engagement, and that sort of thing. If I could hear little more about what that business plan will entail, I'd appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for that question. I think that this program will be significantly enhanced, and it does have a lot of areas that really do need some support. We do look forward to putting this business case together with the partners to ensure that there's a full approach to the school food meal program.

There are many different areas that will need significant enhancement and right now, there are currently no positions dedicated to school food meal programs in our schools. We also would like to see nutritionists working within the department to support our schools develop school food meal menus.

We also have a lot of our schools that are capital standards, and the storage of our food will need to be enhanced. We may need to come forward for significant improvements in our schools to use and utilize and come up with a standard for kitchen spaces and those. I can say Mr. Chairman, we are using the school standards and enhanced school guidelines for our schools that are being renovated or created in the territory.

The ones that are, as of this past school year, the ones that have been worked on are equipped and will be equipped with the new school standards for kitchens. We look forward to the enhancement of this and know that this business case will be very hefty in terms of the work that needs forward to implement this in our schools. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you, Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Will there be development of new curriculum related to nutrition education as appropriate at ages and stages. I ask this because what we know is that many of the foods that were introduced to Inuit were introduced in the complete absence of any nutrition education and how to make healthy choices around what we eat. I think it's really important to build skills from a young age around healthy eating.

That also includes ensuring that children are being taught to choose foods that are not going to have huge impacts on their teeth, I'd appreciate that. Thank you. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for the questions. I guess there are many different ways that we hope that our schools if some of them are already practising these healthy standards by incorporating traditional knowledge and the use of our country food in their schools by the harvesting of these animals and to the teaching of how to prepare them and use them in their kitchens. We've noticed over the past several that our district education authorities are utilizing the kitchen spaces in our schools.

If they do have them and they are the ones that are granted that authority to incorporate those extracurricular spaces, some of them have turned back to incorporating home economics back into the curriculum. We do have that curriculum created and it will be updated with the development of the curriculum that is going forward for K to 12.

However, we're still working on kindergarten to grade 6 and then grades 7 to 9. We look forward to that being updated with the future development of that curriculum and as I mentioned. It is our hope that we will have working on our staff in the future, nutritionists that can directly support our schools in the future, to create healthy food school meal programs and the preparation of that going forward and that we will be implementing and utilizing the healthy food standard guidelines and ensuring that our schools do have nutritious and healthy meals offered and being served. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you Minister Gross and I appreciate this line of questioning Ms. Brewster. I think it's really important not just from the education standpoint, but it brings in family positive traits. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know if everybody can hear my stomach grumbling. It's not why I'm talking about this. I'm afraid the mics will pick it up. I'm also really happy to hear that the nutritionist will be brought into the education system, that's really important.

That component of teaching about how to make healthy choices with store-bought food is the key to success in building the health status of our children and their families. To me, it is very important that any kind of food program also engages children in the preparation of that food so that they can learn skills.

I think its also really important to engage when we talk about, on page 110 of the business plan, there's a bullet that talks about implementing the family engagement initiative. I wonder if the minister can tell us, whether or not part of that family engagement initiative includes having family members come in and participate in the preparation of menus and the actual preparation and serving the food. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for that question. Yes, our department is developing the family engagement strategy that supports approach family involvement within our schools.

We do have a number of different areas for the family engagement to happen within our schools and we do as I mentioned, have the on-the-land programming that happens and runs through our district education authorities' funding that they do receive every year.

They do know schools do offer parental disclosure to go and attend these events if there are parents that do want to engage outside of the school and on the land in these opportunities. There's that capability, but yes, we do want to further promote and expand that initiative.

We really do give the power to our district education authorities to expend those funds as they see fit for their community. Every community is different and there are some programs that have been created and developed that are being shared in other communities and are offered for this type of support.

The work varies from community to community, but we do really like to see and are happy that communities do have family engagement within their schools. We do want to see future projects to engage with the strategy that will align with the department with the strategy to increase attendance and also increase number of our graduates and promote participation of our parents and our community members for our students' success.

It's a very holistic way and approach to encouraging our students and the communities and families to interact with our students and be there with them as we do within our culture and sharing that knowledge and culture on various different levels. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you minister for that response. To be clearer, I'm asking whether or not the families and parents will be engaged in whatever is developed around this standardized school meal program.

I'm asking because it's an opportunity to transfer skills and knowledge about making healthy food choices as well as how to prepare especially, store bought food. If the minister could respond to that, I'd appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for that suggestion. We can take back to the working group and bring that forward, so I thank the member for that suggestion. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that minister. I'm also curious about whether or not; I did hear that the targets are pre-kindergarten to grade 12, which is incredible for this food program that's being developed.

I am also wondering whether or not Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program is part of health engagement because we know that we do often have pregnant people in our schools and what would be great is to know that those young people who are pregnant are receiving healthy food, maybe healthy food to healthy baskets as well. That's a really important part to the nutrition education component. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for that. Currently that is not part of the Department of Education with that initiative. Right now, within the Department of Health, I believe they have the, I don't know the name of the acronym, but they have funding for CPNP and that is there to support that sector.

We can look into the matter and see what we can do to enhance that for expectant moms or mothers that are in our high schools. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. We know that when young people become pregnant, they are more at risk of becoming early leavers. I think any program that gives them an incentive to stay in schools is really important and what we also need to do is we need to work really hard to ensure that especially young people who are pregnant are nutritionally sound because they are growing a new life inside them.

When they are well fed and well educated there are better outcomes for those infants born to them. I would strongly encourage the department to fully engage with health on that. I also spoke last week to the Minister of Health about children who are on the wait list for dental surgery and encouraged the minister to work towards ensuring that those children receive healthy food baskets because what we know is that well fed children are better able to go through any kind of surgery.

They'll have better outcomes if their baseline nutrition is good and healthy. I wonder if the minister would commit to working with the Minister of Health to see that happen. I think that could be really important and strong component of a standardized school food program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for those suggestions. We can take that forward to the working group; however I do know that this

is a significant contribution and know that does contribute to large sum of money that we're looking forward to coming from the business case.

We're hoping that enhancing our school food meal program will have a multi-pronged approach to it, but I can't guarantee what's going to be included in that business case, but we do take the suggestions and bring them forward to the working group.

I do know, Mr. Chairman that there are a number of schools across the territory that put forward proposals for the entire school to receive Child-First Initiative funds and those funds directly go the local store or stores of choice for the parent or guardian to shop at, and I believe the amount that's \$500 per month.

I have seen some communities that have received significant amounts of support through that program for the students in their communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister to your knowledge do any of the schools in Iqaluit avail of that program? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the Iqaluit schools we do have some of our schools, I believe receive funding from Child-First Initiative for enhanced school meal program.

For the individual proposals for each family, I think it goes on a case-by-case basis. If there are people listening, if they would like support to have that, I know there's a process to receiving those funds to support food at home.

I think working in this region is Arctic Children and Youth, that's the organization that supports those applications for funding through the Child-First Initiative. Once that proposal is received and the support letters there, the applicant would receive the funds directly to a store here in Iqaluit or their home community where they live and they can shop monthly for their children, Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you very much for that minister. Just for clarity, that's the Arctic Children and Youth Foundation. I'll just talk a little bit more about the family engagement initiative. What we know is that in order to support children and youth through their entire educational career, we need to ensure parents or guardians are able to support them in their education.

If the minister could talk really quickly, I'm trying to talk quickly now cause my times running out; talk about how that family engagement initiative works to destigmatize the education system in order to make it feel like a safer place for those generations of

parents and guardians that had negative experiences through residential schools and other issues with education system. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for that question. I think it's kind of hard to answer that question because it's very much our hopes that our schools will enhance our communities with our families that are attending school and work with them to meet the needs of each community.

Each community has different needs, but we do want to ensure that gaps are filled and that if there are any areas people may feel are still there in terms of support, we have had mental health support enhanced and I know that the Department of Health also has a number of different supports as well, with 1-800 numbers and healing through talking.

Hopefully, that would support anything people may feel if it comes up, being triggered, we do have school counsellors in our schools as well. This family engagement strategy is targeted to have a long-term approach for encouraging family involvement. I think it would go case-by-case and work to support the needs that arise if they do.

To know that our schools are safe by creating the strategy and having those engagement sessions with our families in our schools is one of those barriers where our doors are open, and we do have programs and activities or meals together, those types of things that bring in the family and bring everyone together for inclusive education and to support our family dynamics in our schools.

It's very different, but we do really look forward to having more family engagement and the use of this engagement strategy to further support our students and their parents or guardians if there are any supports needed for them. I encourage anyone if they are seeking traumatic times to reach out to the appropriate channels as there's so much support out there but speaking to your public nurse I think it would be the first step or the school principal or somebody you trust to lead you in the right direction. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I echo that statement from the minister. I think it's really important to encourage any family or anybody who is having problems with any kind of education system or any system to reach out and ask for help because the help is there.

Just before I go to my last question, I wanted to take a moment because we're talking about families. Mr. Quqqiaq acknowledged my aunty Gina Pizzo and my aunt Elizabeth Lyall for their long-term service awards in education in Taloyoak and I'd like to acknowledge them as well. They both have had a tremendous impact on our community.

Moving on to the reporting mechanism that is mentioned on the family engagement initiative, I can't recall whether or not I have asked this before, but if I could hear from the minister what metrics are being tracked for those school level engagements and how will they be measured? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the question. With the family engagement strategy, we're working to inform the development of this strategy. The department has completed the current state report and a territorial scan, and our next step is to fill the gaps identified through this scan with the current framework and it starts at home.

Some of the gaps include creating and implementing mechanisms for evaluation and reporting. Within that strategy, it will support and align the department's current and future projects to encourage family engagement, but in terms of the maybe key indicators or the different areas that we do want to see, we would like to have regional support and reaching out to our community school events and engagements and reaching parents more regularly as well as working with the mental health staff and our parents as well, and work closely with that.

We also have our principal reporting mechanism and we have piloted that and three schools are working with that preschool reporting mechanism this year and we're working to see how that can be enhanced or revised and we look forward to that rolling out to all of our schools to utilize.

There is a portion there of levels on engagement and tracking what engagement is happening in our schools as well as meeting with parents and other types of information is being measured and being reported on in that tool. With that, we're going to be able to track back information and utilize it to the best of our abilities to increase family engagements and share best practices and initiatives that are happening across the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Brewster, your time is expired, but did you have a follow-up... I missed a couple things of your questions in that response. Ms. Brewster.

Ms. Brewster: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister did refer to the formalized principal reporting mechanism, which was just the gist of my question. What I want to know is what metrics are being tracked in that reporting system and how are those metrics being measures and also reported on? The minister kind of went off and eventually got around to that but didn't answer my question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. That principal reporting does have a number of different pages, and we're just

trying to pull up the information of all the information that is collected within those reporting areas. There are a number of different things that are incorporated in that report, and we are looking to see how we can enhance that report. I don't have the reports within my briefing notes, but we can look to provide that information to the members, what's included in that information that is being reported on and get back to the members. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you for that, Minister Gross. I'm going to recognize the clock right now. We'll take a 15-minute break. Thank you.

>>Committee recessed at 15:15 and resumed at 15:44

Chairman (Mr. Savikataaq): Good afternoon. I would like to call the committee meeting back to order. We're here to do Education's O&M budget. We're on page G-6. Corporate Services. The next person on the list is Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, minister and to your officials. Staying on the subject of the standardized school meal programs that's being worked on. (interpretation) What will they be eating for the students that are eating in the school, will they be eating county food as well along with non-country food. Thank you.

Chairman (Savikataaq) (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Just to correct myself, it's on the wrong page, we're on G-4 Directorate. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We're looking into that as an option for our school food meal programs to have country food included. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to ask this question because some Inuit have been raised using country food, and it's nutritious. When they're going through healing, Inuit feel better when they eat country food after they crave it and it's cheaper than store bought food. I believe that young people should be eating country food in their schools for their mental health. What does the minister think of that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. As I stated to a previous member, we will be hiring a nutritionist and I know that the working group will take that comment going forward.

We do have to consider the safety of the students as well, but I look forward to having our country food incorporated into the future plans for school food meal programs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll switch to English. That's the whole reason I'm speaking regarding country food health and safety. It's been proven locally in each community that by word of mouth, eating country food does help lead a healthier life. People are getting stronger, healthier and not getting sick as often. I'm wondering what the minister means by safety. If she can elaborate what she's talking about there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. To clarify, we're looking to good safety practices, safe handling of food, country food and the preparation of that, and along with that comes the storage of that food and storage of our country food is usually frozen, and better enhance spaces in our schools that support that initiative and having that type of country food in our schools is what we want to see, but it does have to go through the working group.

I know there are other agencies that are out there that develop wonderful programs for separation of country food and harvesting country food through our local hunters' and trappers' organizations.

I know during the COVID pandemic, there was a lot of extra support out there given to our local hunters' and trappers' organizations to go out and harvest country food our communities.

Perhaps that type of similar situation can happen for our schools, along with on-the-land programming, which I know they do harvest animals in various communities and prepare them and serve them either on the land or in the community.

When I went to Coral Harbour last year, in April, we were served traditional country food, *tuktu*, right in the school from the harvest that the students had caught, so that's an example of some of that information knowledge sharing that's being passed down within our schools. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to be fair, let me ask as well. The non-country food, it will be fully scrutinized as well, not just the country food that's caught, but you're going to fully scrutinize the store-bought foods as well for the health and safety of our school children. Can the minister please verify? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. Yes, that's correct. It will be going through a process as we don't have those standards right now, but

we are working to develop them and we will have a nutritionist work with us to come up with alternatives and showcasing what foods are out there.

We can also have programs where students go shopping, for example, to purchase food from the stores to create the meals that they cook, and we can be innovative in that approach, but yes, it will be for all food whether it's country food or store-bought food. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for clarity, when do you expect this work to be done on standardizing the school meal programs, is it in the next fiscal year, this summer? Do they know? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. It will take us a little bit of time to get this prepared. As I stated, we do have the working group, which I know this is one of their areas that they are looking at and working with the Department of Health particularly for the school food guide and having that incorporated. I believe the timeframe would be within this government. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is the minister inferring that it will be in place by next fall? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) From what I heard, she says by the end of this government, so that would be October 2025, but if the minister can clarify. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank the member for that question. That is the plan that we will have the business case proposed coming before the end of this government, and that would include that aspect of the enhanced school food meal program and the guidelines. That would be working to have that completed by October 2025 as this is a multi-tiered approach, all of our schools offer different school food meal programs and they're at different stages.

As I mentioned before, some schools are already utilizing the child first initiative and enhancing their school food meal programs with that funding, but this will also be available and ready hopefully by next year to submit to the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister. I just want to quickly quote a Nunavut news article from October 3, 2023. It's regarding the breakfast program. Agnico Eagle makes \$5 million worth of donations, of that \$2.5 million is to go to the Breakfast Club of Canada, which will then be forwarded to... for the Breakfast Club of Canada, the money will ensure that every school child in the Kivalliq and Kitikmeot enjoy nourishing breakfast for at least three years, stated in the news release from the organization.

Is the department involved in that, have they been reached out to, or has the department reached out to them in how much of that is going through Kivalliq and more specifically to Baker Lake? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that. Yes, we have worked directly and had meetings with Agnico Eagle Mines in regard to this initiative. The funds that are there would not be directed to the Department of Education, and they will direct it to the Breakfast Club of Canada, and that is why that agreement is there to enhance the school food meal program within the Kivalliq and Kitikmeot from that fund that is there.

We are ready to implement, I shouldn't say we but they are ready to implement that school breakfast program in the two regions and hopefully we can see other mines follow suit to offer the same kind of enhancement if they're listening, we hope they are to this region as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister mentioned agreements in place and whatnot. Has the money been transferred or flowing now to these breakfast programs in the Kivalliq and Kitikmeot based on the Agnico Eagle donation? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. I don't have that detailed information that is third-party funds that are outside of the Department of Education's scope, we don't receive the funds within the department to offer that program. That is a partnership that supports our schools in those two regions directly from the Breakfast Club of Canada, but we can look into the situation and see when those funds will be coming to our schools. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister for the commitment. Moving along to my next question, the full-day kindergarten was being discussed earlier.

I do know Baker Lake is currently not on the list. What I wanted to find out is for the next cohort full-day kindergarten community schools, is there a contingency plan in place? God forbid a catastrophic issue with a school happens. There have been instances where a school burned down, which would delay a project.

Is the department ready to move on to another community to offer full-day kindergarten a year sooner than previously expected? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. I think that is one area where we wouldn't be ready to shift into a different community because our efforts would be focused on repairing a school if it did go into a certain type of disaster situation. I don't believe that would happen, but if it does, we'll take it as it comes but we hope that it would never happen again. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So there is no contingency plan to offer full day Kindergarten to another community sooner, is that what the minister is saying? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. At this point, we're just committed to the seven schools that are identified for this coming fiscal year, and that's what our focus area is and if anything changes, we don't foresee shifting to another school, but we would take it as it comes and I can't speak to put the cart before the horse, but right now as I see it we can only offer full-day kindergarten this coming school year to the seven identified communities. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not trying to put the cart before horse but it's only prudent to have contingency plans in place, to be proactive instead of reactive. Far too many times, institutions are being reactive instead of being proactive and falling further behind. I'm sorry to the interpreters as I started speaking a little too fast, but I would strongly encourage the department to have a contingency plan in place. I don't need a commitment, but it's something worth looking into.

Move on now for my next questioning Mr. Chairman unless the minister want to quickly speak to what I just said. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to that for the member brought forward. The Department of Education would not be able to do additional schools if there was one from these seven that couldn't go forward as the cost prevents us to do additional schools and replace of what is on the list right now.

For this coming school year, we do have budgetary constraints. We also have our sealift which is a large portion of what is coming forward, the RFPs will have to go up very shortly for contractors to bid and get their orders of materials and supplies because these are all renovated schools. Renovations to schools and they will come with building materials and supplies that will be used to shipped to our communities.

At this point its hard to pivot and put another school on the list if something was to happen, I will leave it there Mr. Chairman but we do look forward to other schools coming down with this pilot project underway.

We look forward to the rollout of more schools and we will need to put forward business cases for those schools as they will have significant cost implications to either renovating or expanding the other schools that are out there that not yet full-day kindergarten. With the five pilot schools and an additional seven that are here, so far those are the ones that under about \$300,000 each, at this point we would have to come forward with additional funding requests to do additional schools for full-day kindergarten in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to pivot over to the department and the Nunavut Teacher Education Program I believe the department funds through Nunavut Arctic College.

I'm wondering has some graduates that went through the Nunavut Teacher Education Program failed to be selected for a teaching position in any of the schools. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. Yes, I believe there were instances of candidates who did complete the Nunavut Teacher Education Program go through the hiring process and not be selected as teachers in our schools.

However, we are working to improve that for our students that are in that program that the Department of Education supports through financial contribution. We would like and had discussions to have the student do resume writing as well as working on the interview process and going through mock scenarios and doing that during their practicum time ensure that students are well equipped to go through that process. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm wondering, does that mean, then, the Nunavut Teacher Education Program that's being run through Nunavut Arctic College needs to be amended. It sounds like it's not meeting the needs of some students, not just all but some need to be amended, is that the case? Because I'd hate to see so much time and money be invested in teaching Nunavummiut to become teachers then all of it being for naught. Does that mean the curriculum needs to be amended maybe? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that. I believe that it's better suited for Nunavut Arctic College to respond to that question when they do appear before the committee of the whole as it's their program and they're the ones that are delivering program for the students.

As I indicated, we have seen that concern come forward. I can't give the numbers, I don't know exactly how many students that might not have been offered a teaching position after completion of the Nunavut Teacher Education Program but I think the numbers are very small. There may be a handful, if that.

With that we know the hiring process is competitive and has a number of different panel members from the district education authority to the principal and we work to ensure that we will have students recruited and hired.

Supporting them with their resume writing and supporting them with the mock interview, I think that will really help the students.

If a student doesn't get hired for a teaching position for a certain reason, for one, they are encouraged to apply again and hopefully they will see themselves as a teacher.

That is the hope of the whole overall outlook for the Nunavut Teacher Education Program students is to come and work in our schools and we really do hope that they're able to be best supported as a student and to get them prepared to come into work in our schools with those outlined supports we are working with Nunavut Arctic College on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you. Just before I go back to Mr. Simailak, I think Mr. Simailak wanted to know the way I understood was, does the curriculum meet the minimum standards for Department of Education for them to hire the teacher? I don't think he was implying on the arctic college yet. Does the program meet the minimum requirements for Education? Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Hello. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

>> *Laughter*

It does definitely meet the requirements for the Department of Education. Sorry I missed that point. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If it does meet the minimum requirements, how often is the Department of Education consulting with Arctic College to figure out the root causes as to why there are some students not meeting requirements to becoming a teacher?

You can keep encouraging the student to keep applying but if it's setup for failure at the beginning, because each student is different, they're not going to get to the career they want to get into and it leads back to mental health issues.

How often is the department consult with Nunavut Arctic College to ensure that every student that goes through their program can be hired for a teaching position? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. We do really want to see the teachers that are graduates of the Nunavut Teacher Education Program come and work into our schools successfully.

As indicated, there are those two areas that we are looking to implement with resumé writing and the interview process. I believe that will really enhance and support the students. I can say off the record that it is about under five students that have been unsuccessful as going through the interview process, but I know that we do want to support them and we're looking to support them through that process with enhancing their resume writing and interviewing. Hopefully we'll see all students come through that and work with us. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Just before I go to Mr. Simailak, we're on TV so we're not off the record, minister. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Moving along, on page 109, under stakeholder engagement, it says provide administrative support to the elders advisory committee.

I'm wondering what is that elders' advisory committee and what do they do with the Education department and where are the elders coming from, which communities, how many are there? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. We have elder advisors in multiple different sectors that we use them and their expertise and advise for. One of the main areas that we do use the elders is through the curriculum development and they gather in Arviat for their elder, the consultations to curriculum and enhancing the curriculum with using *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* and incorporating that in our schools. They also talk about the Makitattiarniq safe and caring schools in the planning guide and resources, they have been utilized in consultations for other areas.

We also have them as cultural teachers in our schools, and we have the certification program where the elders come into their schools with their vulnerable and criminal record check and work as transmitters where they pass on their traditional knowledge to the students. There are many different areas where we have elders incorporated in the whole school aspect of what we have available.

Curriculum development is the main area where we use their expertise, and then furthermore, on-the-land programming and elder programs that each school has set aside monies through the district education authorities to hire elders to work at our schools on a daily or regular basis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Following my list of names, Ms. Killiktee.

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question I'd like to ask is a question that were asked earlier. I will pass those. In the communities, the kindergarten students is where I'd like to ask some questions. With full-day kindergarten classes and the way it's laid out, in comparison to other grades, we have children sitting down and writing or learning to write.

How is this program rolled out for those in the communities that have been piloted and in our community, what changes have you made since the pilot project? What is the situation at the moment? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. Right now, the department has a working group, which established a guide to shape the comprehensive teacher's handbook and that was created to support the Kindergarten teachers and the shift to full-day kindergarten from half day to full day. With that working group and the development of that teacher's handbook, it is used to ensure that our educators are supported and that our youngest students can fully benefit from that opportunity.

This past September, we offered monthly teams meetings, as well as held a meeting to ensure that kindergarten teachers in those pilot communities were well supported. We also have teachers that are with other teacher mentors and they have travelled to other communities with the full-day kindergarten to support each classroom to ensure that *Inuit*

Qaujimajatuqangit focus of the curriculum is being implemented for the students to utilize.

What we do know that will full-day kindergarten, the students are receiving more language instruction time and time to learn about our culture and hear our language and utilize it throughout the full school day.

We look forward to receiving the feedback from those five pilot schools on how the pilot program has been throughout the school year and look forward to making any considerations and changes to the program based on this past school year that we're currently in and revise anything that needs to be changed for the future full-day kindergarten program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank you for that and how it's being rolled out. With regard to the kindergarten students, when they complete and learning skills, things that are maybe fun, have those been considered as part that they have a program that is fun for the children and allows children to move about as they tend to, has that been also considered in the program? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. Yes, we are incorporating *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* into the curriculum where the full-day kindergarten and it is also play-based as well. There is two different ways and we look forward to having the opportunity to offer full-day kindergarten because we have seen positive results so far from what we've heard, the students are enjoying going to school full-time.

There's less student emotional outbursts because they're in a consistent place all day and not going from home or daycare or a caregiver to school and/or going home after. They're in school all day so they're feeling well supported and they have the adequate number of learning hours with play hours and are excelling from what I've heard so far. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is very good news. However, communities have leaders, elders and not just elders, but who show leadership. In view of that, are they fully included in view of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, in caring for children, utilizing Inuit social lifestyles? Are communities fully participating too? I'm asking if that is the case. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that great question. Our made-in-Nunavut curriculum is being implemented and we have key milestones that we are very excited about and that the department has been working on. This coming next year 2025, our kindergarten and grade 1 students will see the implementation of that new curriculum which is highly embedded with *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit*, the values and principles incorporated into that curriculum. It is very much a made-in-Nunavut curriculum. We're so excited for that content to come into our schools, not just for the full-day kindergarten, but for all kindergarten classrooms.

We look forward to them having immersion with Inuktitut language and having that available and the subsequent work the additional grades going forward and rolling those out in the coming years. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Here under the *Katuujiluta* mandate in the priorities, it states on page 108 that the 10 bullets what areas are important, what will be rolled out or implemented, these are outlined. Then here, where it states that if I used that as a base, I want to include here school counsellors in schools with that and communities that have counsellors is an area I would like to ask first. Do all schools have student counsellors? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. All of our schools are setup to have school community counsellors.

However, not all schools do have school community counsellors, but we're constantly working to ensure that those positions are filled and if they are not filled that we work throughout the school year to try and get them into the schools when best we can.

I know there are a number of different programs, bachelor of social work programs, for example, which is a great program with the Nunavut Arctic College and the enhancement of that that we'll see additional supports of those graduates coming into our schools. We do have the schools that as a position, unfortunately they're not all filled at this point. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Here in the Sixth Assembly, as we started, I did raise a question and I remember that the school counsellors with no change to date as I understand it. Nothing has changed, nothing have enhanced. It seems to be the same old area.

The school counsellors are very important and you did mention at that time, if I'm not mistaken when I heard I thought of a male and female be student counsellor. If a man is a

counsellor and working with a female that we've heard, there may be two student counsellor because of gender. Has this been analyzed or looked into because, as you said, it's not fully rolled out, it's not as complete yet. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to the member for the advocacy of the Ilinniarvimmi Inuusiliriji. I do know that there are vacancies for the positions in some of our schools but we really do want to recruit and hire them and it doesn't have a timeframe when we can hire those positions.

I know that very often if they are out for competition there some of them are open until filled or open with a timeframe. I have received correspondence from a few people, members, regarding school community counsellors and supporting the implementation of having that position hired within a school or within schools. I would like to ask our deputy minister to further elaborate that point. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Hainnu (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the question. School counsellor positions have been advertised, because each school operates its own school, has its own operations, so they set out job advertisements themselves. If you would like to see which schools have counsellors, we can collect that information together and send it out to the members. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. There's something also I'd like to understand. Now, each community should have two school counsellors, one male and one female. So will that be a possibility that will be my first question. Is that doable? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. That is the same question basically. I'll give it directly to Ms. Hainnu.

Ms. Hainnu (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for the question. Your question helps the school. That has been looked at and I'm not sure if it's in all the schools yet but it has started, and once we have that information we'll bring it to the Assembly. Thank you.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My two constituency communities of Uqqummiut, Clyde River and Qikiqtarjuaq, I'd like to know if they have school student counsellors and if they don't, I want confirmation that if the positions will be advertised. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the question. We can commit to looking into that information and getting back to the member with those particular details. Yes, we do work with our regional school operations to ensure those positions are posted if they are vacant and have them there but we can look into that area as well if they are vacant and share those details with the member. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the response to my question, so I'll be expecting that further information.

I'd like to move on to this matter, the criminal record checks are done for people applying for jobs or who are going to be working for a while or if they're going to be escorting students.

It's called a criminal records check. I know that this slows things a lot, can this be explained further. With the lack of people that can help fill out applications or forms in general and Inuit generally know how to fill out forms.

Has there been any planning done translate that information into Inuktitut, because there's some people who cannot read English at all. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. I would recommend that if there is anyone that does need assistance for the criminal record checks as they are part of the Government of Nunavut hiring process within the Human Resources department that they perhaps go and seek support from the government liaison officer in each of our communities to get assistance with those forms.

Those are what they are there for but however, I do think that the RCMP in each community are there to assist and work on that for them to be submitted. In terms of the length of time, that is out of our control and it is part of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. They are the ones that do the screening after they receive those forms and look at the individual forms to see if the individual does have a criminal record and they are safe to work in our schools with the completion their criminal record checks and their vulnerable sector check. Those are the two forms that we do require and the need for people to be in our schools and to work in our schools. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for giving us a good reminder. This leads to my next question, my last question. Working to improve things to

make thing more positive, the long term workers, especially I'm asking about staff evaluations. Has the department kept up to date on all the staff evaluations that are needed to be done? Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That will be my final question.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. It is the school leaders, the school principals and vice principals are in charge of those evaluations and they are done every year.

All of our schools are different in terms of, I guess, completed or not completed evaluations but we do require those to be completed every year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Killiktee (interpretation): You said that you give directions to do that. Have you looked to see if the evaluations are going well? I'd like to know how the evaluations have been going. It just seems like the response is they don't care kind of thing. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We do check every year for those evaluations, and those are done in partnership with our regional school operations. They're in charge of the handling of those evaluations and we do have a database that is used to collect that information. We do review that information as they do come forward every year and work with those as they do come. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) I have no more names on my list. We're going through Education. Branch Summary. Directorate. Total Operations and Maintenance. \$7,576,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you. I want members to go to G-5. The branch summary of policy and planning, first one on the list is Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to first start talking about the student-educator ratio. If the minister could inform me what the national average is and what Nunavut's student/educator is currently at. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. Nunavut's ratio is 13.5 to 1 and the national standard is 14 to 1, so we are above that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's something I've been bringing up fairly regularly now I'm glad to see a slight improvement. I usually just point one of the differences from the national average.

My argument on this topic has always been I know legally, we have to maintain the student/educator ratio better than the national average according to the legislation, but I've always been of the belief that we should just be blowing this out of the water. We look at the education outcomes that were achieved and are not achieving right now, and I think we should be a leader in the industry.

I would just like to get the minister's perspective on how close we're scurrying to that legal, following the legal parameters. If the minister would be interested in really going down a path to expand how many teachers are available and even further increase the student/educator ratio. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. The national average is from 2011, so we know that we're above that average. I would like to ask Mr. Suleiman to further elaborate on the member's other question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Suleiman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank the member for the question. Like the minister had mentioned, the national average that we poll from is from a 2011 report from Stats Canada.

Unfortunately, they don't complete that report anymore. When we looked around, done jurisdictional reviews to see what other reports we can poll from and we've spoken to CMEC but everything we've seen so far that we've polled actually has a much higher national average, closer to 18, 19 to 1.

Without having to change that, we've kept it the same and we're well below where things are nationally at present. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What's one of the earlier responses the minister spoke to how many vacancies with teachers and how many substitute teachers are

working to fill those gaps. How many of those substitute teachers have their bachelors of education? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. At this point, we don't know of any substitute teachers that hold a bachelor of education. We would hope that we could recruit them and work in our schools. At this point Mr. Chairman, we don't know of any teachers that are working as a substitute. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Hicke: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's what I figured. When we look at the number of substitutes, it was in the hundreds, or in vacancies in the hundreds, I think it was 140 or something like that and I think the minister might have mentioned it might even be more than that, I think was around 400 if my memory serves me; anyway, irrelevant.

When we look at the amount of substitute teachers that are used to fill these gaps and we look at the collective bargaining that's going to be coming up soon, and I obviously don't want to influence any type of those discussions and I'm not looking for any numbers or any type of commitment on that regards from the minister. When we look at recruitment and retention, a lot of times it's the money that attracts people here initially and then it's the lifestyle and the people here that keep them longer term, but unfortunately, a lot of things does revolve around money.

I would just make a comment. I would like the minister to really consider the negotiation stance that the department takes with the union when they sit down to the table. I'll just leave it at that, but I would like to go down a little bit more on the retention of existing teachers. It's been talked about a little bit of the work that's been done to recruit but I can't imagine we're at the top of the scale of retention in the country of teachers. We all see in the communities how there's rolling over of positions and teachers.

What specific actions and programs are in place to assist with retention of existing teachers? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We do have a number of different initiatives that the department has underway. We're working on the Inuit-specific recruitment strategy. We are working actively recruit Inuktitut-speaking educators in our schools.

We also support the Nunavut Teacher Education Program. There are currently 137 students in that program and we hope that we can recruit them into our schools in the near future when they are graduated.

We also have the Education Leave Program, Sivummuakpallirutiksats, that funds the Nunavut Employees Union school staff to go into the Nunavut Teacher Education Program.

We also have a number of employees that are student support assistants, secretaries or Iliniarvimmi Inuusiliriji availing of funding opportunities to go into the Nunavut Teacher Education Program.

We are also working to complete a review of our educator compensation and benefits. So, that will help us to examine the role of our compensation in our recruitment and retention. We expect this review to be completed in the 2024-25 fiscal year and that we can use that to inform the collective agreement negotiations.

We also have the language bonus that we have available with the Nunavut Teachers Association for our Inuktitut teachers. We are working to go career fairs, universities, also using social media to enhance campaigns through ads on Facebook, Google and also working to direct potential jobs seekers to our recruitment website at gov.nu.ca/teachinnunavut.

We're also working to expand our national advertising, including print advertisement in popular national magazines. McLeans is another area.

We're also looking to expand our direct contact with faculties of education at universities to increase our southern hires. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) I heard a lot about recruitment but not much about retention and the member did ask about retention. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: You just summed it up perfectly, Mr. Chairman. Same question's asked but from a retention standpoint. Thank you.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. I would like to ask Mr. Suleiman to further elaborate on the retention piece. Thank you, Mr. Chairman

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

Mr. Suleiman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for the question. For retention, one of the things the department is looking to do is we understand a lot of the issues that are happening in our schools.

We want to expand our HR division, similar to CGS and Department of Health that have a Director of HR within that division, there will be a Manager of Recruitment and Retention-specific job to look to make the schools systems more welcoming. Looking at all the key items we talked about compensation and benefits.

Reducing ER issues, Employee Relation issues in schools to make it work employee relation issues in schools and any other brainstorming sessions that come that to better, to make our schools more welcoming. Our department is working on expanding that division. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. If I can just remind members for both acronym for the interpreters. I assume ER is educational ratio but I'm only guessing. Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: That was Employee Relations that he was referencing.

I'm just trying to think how to word this now. With the information that Mr. Suleiman just provided with the work that's been done, I have a similar question on the school counsellor positions that are in the schools. What type of qualifications are needed to be a school counsellor? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. Right now the *Ilinniarvimmi Inuusiliriji*, the positions are very open. We have a number of different people working in the sector with various different backgrounds. But it is focused on *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* and principles behind that. Right those people in the positions come from a wide array of background. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While I appreciate diversity, especially with experience, there has to some standardization of the qualifications for the position. A school counsellor can do an incredible amount of good for students in their life planning, education planning, helping to address day-to-day issues.

If you get the wrong person in there it can do significant amount of damage. When I hear something that's so general, it worries me. Somebody can have an incredibly negative impact on our children as they're pulling through the academics process.

I'd like to get a little more clarification on the role and how people would be screened in or out if the qualifications are so vague. Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. Our *ilinniarvimmi inuusiliriji* goes through different types of training for their

positions when they are hired into the job, and I would like deputy minister Hainnu to elaborate on the opportunity for people to work in that field. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Hainnu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for the question. You're absolutely right, Ilinniarvimmi Inuusiliriji petitioned to be standardized and it must be professional. In our current developing territory where housing is an issue, we do need to hire locally, and those local trained *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* based *Ilinniarvimmi inuusiliriji* will need to be standardized in their profession, and we are working towards that. Currently, through student achievement division, we do an annual conference and we do train *ilinniarvimmi inuusiliriji*; we are working towards that among many other initiatives within the department. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know at the very least anecdotally, but I think there's a lot of discussion around here in the last week or so on violence in the schools. When we look at the monitoring or reporting changes that have been made up, that's one aspect of it. What actual programs have been initiated by the department to reduce violence in schools whether that be helping people with coping skills or one thing that was suggested to me at one point is a Nunavut-specific health curriculum with some specific focus on mental health.

Again, to have coping strategies and to have, especially with the high prevalence of violence in the schools and outside the schools, I'm not saying that it's only happening in the schools, it's happening too often in homes and other aspects of people's lives.

What specific programs are there being initiated, implemented, to reduce violence in the schools, and I would like to get the minister's perspective on my suggestion or whether there is work being done on health-specific health curriculum. I'm not waiting for the curriculum division. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the opportunity. Our *ilinniarvimmi inuusiliriji* and other school staff have a lot of training opportunities, whether it be in person or online to support the development of oneself within the workforce, and we do have specialized training opportunities for different positions. We have as well symposiums that are focused and geared to a specific subject area. Last subject for the *ilinniarvimmi inuusiliriji* was, they included training on safety planning.

We also had the previous year, they did training on be safe, a child protection and safety program. In the 2021 school year, they did virtual physiological first aid training, and

prior to COVID, there was a training conference focused on mental health programming and pathways to support students.

There are a number of different initiatives that are available every year for our *ilinniarvimmi inuusiliriji* and others. We also work with the Canadian Red Cross to offer different types of training. In 2023, we introduced a crisis prevention institute verbal intervention training, and we're able to use that to better equip our staff to safely respond to violent incidents. That verbal intervention training is available to all Department of Education staff and senior management and contractors as well. It's designed to support our educators with their essential tools to respond effectively to students and parents in distress and ensure that the safety and security of our schools.

We have that course available in English, French and Inuktitut. Right now, we have had over 425 people participate in that program, that course in 23 of our schools. We look forward to the upcoming sessions that they will be taking the next cohort next week, March 15. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Hickee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to get an answer to the second part of my question on the health-specific curriculum where life skills and coping skills and other mental health supports could be highlighted in such a curriculum development. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We do work with the Department of Health on the Inuusivut mental health and addictions. They meet regularly to support ongoing collaboration, and we have education representatives who participate on a territorial mental health advisory council.

We are also a part of the joint consortium of social health, and we have representatives from the Department of Health and the Department of Education from each province and territory that work to identify and address the areas of research to share resources and best practices, as well as student mental health and wellbeing, which is the consistent focus of that joint consortium for school health.

In terms of working with the Department of Health, we have some curriculum that is also underway. We have the Ajunngittugut, the social emotional learning and resources program, and that was developed by child and youth mental health clinicians. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Following my list, Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to start off with the Sivummuakpallirutiksat Inuit education leave program. I note in previous annual reports,

the budget has been constant at \$420,000 a year. Since it was introduced, at which time I was very excited and in full support of this program.

However, information provided in the last three annual reports have showed actual expenditure of ranging from \$30,000 to \$50,000 for this important program, lapsing 80 to 90 percent of the budget.

What is the rationale for this underutilization of this important budget, and can we get an update on the utilization for the current year? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We really do support our staff that are interested in becoming teachers to take an avail of the wonderful training opportunities out there through what the member is asking about the Sivummuakpallirutiksats, sorry for my pronunciation, of that training opportunity where the Department of Education does cover 80 percent of employee salary if they are a part of the Nunavut Employees Union.

After completion of the Nunavut Teacher Education Program, they will become Nunavut Teacher Association members. We currently do have six Inuit accessing that program, and availing of that. It is part of our recruitment and retention that we do need to advertise that program more within our schools for our staff and to share that opportunity is available.

I believe there are wonderful programs out there and I thank the government and this House for passing and allowing for those training opportunities. We do want to see more people coming through and if anyone is listening and would like to become a teacher and is working currently within the government, there is that opportunity to go through and become recruited as a new teacher by using that training program and the funds from that program to go to school and become a teacher. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) And the second part of question was how much of the budget has been expended to this year's budget? Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Currently, we have set aside \$538,000 and we have spent \$330,000 on that. Sorry, I think I might have said it wrong. Maybe I'll get Mr. Suleiman to explain that line item. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Suleiman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the member for the question. In our budget within this policy division, we set aside \$330,000 a year for the Sivummuakpallirutiksats program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand the necessity of this budget and I do fully support it. It's integral in reaching the Inuit language of instruction obligation. My next question is; what is the average cost to put a Nunavut employee through one year of this program? In order to utilize the entire \$420,000 budget, how many employees would that represent? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. Just to correct, sorry, the member's numbers, it was \$330,000 for this coming fiscal year that we have set aside for the training opportunity.

With the current budget that is proposed, we can fund about 12 staff through that program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This upcoming budget, I'm assuming is for an academic year from September to April. Most post-secondary institutions that offer bachelor of education, I'm assuming that the application process is quite early in the calendar year, January to March.

So far, in advance of the upcoming academic school year, in which the potential Inuit employees of the Department of Education will be going to school under this program, how has the department advertised this and how many employees have expressed an interest to participate in the upcoming year and begun the process of applying for first year bachelor of education program? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We do plan on sharing the opportunity with our regional school operations. When we did that in the past, that's when we could see the influx of students that applied with this program. We do plan on sharing that with the regional school operations, who will share it with our schools.

Hopefully, with the announcement that was recently made with Nunavut Arctic College and the program opportunities and the timelines of when programs are being offered and that being available as of last week, we have people becoming interested in the program. This is also a time where we put out applications for positions and job postings. Hopefully, we have people who are interested and start to work on that process very quickly. If they do work in the education system, if they are in a position, they do need and require training and want to avail of this opportunity, they start the process soon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The college and university application process is quite lengthy and, like I said, does typically start in January and even sooner, in the fall, for programs that are much more competitive. I'm sort of unclear about the process in which the department advertises and then approves employees to apply for programs or what the exact process is, but I'll leave it at that and just recommend that the minister does initiate the process far in advance.

I understand that Arctic College has a much later application process than other degree-granting universities that offer education programs, but that shouldn't be the only resort for the teachers. I would like to be assured that Department of Education employees have the opportunity to go to university anywhere in Canada under this education leave program.

I'll move on to my next line of questioning and it's in relation to the Planning, Reporting and Evaluation Division of this branch. As I previously indicated, the annual reports of the Department of Education... . Sorry; I'm going to get the name of it correct. The Department of Education progress report for the Language of Instruction Regulations and curriculum, which has been tabled on a few occasions thus far, does provide some status updates on the curriculum development and the resource development for that curriculum, but it does not contain information on the number of bilingual Inuktitut-speaking teachers that are capable of providing the bilingual education that is set out in the timelines in the *Education Act*.

I also note that the Department of Education's annual report does list a number of 187 bilingual Inuktitut-speaking teachers, but I would like to request that the format be adjusted for both the reports to include a detailed listing of bilingual Inuktitut-speaking teachers so that we will be able to track the progress aside from the curriculum and resource development to ensure the eventual rollout by grade and by year is achieved. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that suggestion. Yes, with the work that is being done on the Language of Instruction Regulations and working to implement the new reporting, we can include that in our annual reports and have that information available. We will also reach out to our educators and see if we have missed any that might avail of the language incentive and, if they do, our numbers might be higher than they are reported currently because they might not be captured in this data. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you for that commitment. My next line of questioning is going to be in relation to the Policy Development Division. Earlier in the sitting, the Minister of

Family Services gave a minister's statement about the renewal of the Surusinut Ikajuqtiit, the Child Abuse and Neglect Response Agreement.

In the past, I have raised concerns with the Department of Education that when children are placed in care or apprehended for safety reasons and placed in foster care or otherwise, that information was not being passed on to school faculty and teachers. There are some very real implications when that information is not passed on to the teachers and other members of the school team.

When this child abuse and neglect response agreement was renewed and a revised agreement was created and signed, what input did the Department of Education provide on this specific issue? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the question. The Department of Education does look forward to supporting students that might go into guardianship. This is an area that we are looking to work closely with the Department of Family Services on to enhance that, as there is an area there that if a student does go into guardianship, it is the guardian's responsibility at the moment to share that information with the school. We will work to make improvements where necessary with that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to give another example that I have also given in the past, an instance where a child faces abuse at home and they are taken and the parents or the guardians are given instructions not to be in contact with the child. That information was not being passed on to school faculty. The teachers did not know that the parent was not supposed to come in close distance or in contact with the child, and I expressed my concern over that. Has that issue been addressed in this revised child abuse and neglect response agreement? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. Right now, we are looking for training that will be explored for this area for the duty to report with the Department of Family Services. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have expressed concern over this for quite a while. I can't recall the exact year which I brought it up; it was quite recent. Just one last time, I would like to ask: since this agreement was first put in place and subsequently revised, has information begun flowing to the Department of Education and school faculty? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that. At this point, we haven't received any information. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) We're on Education Branch, Policy and Planning. I have no more names on my list. Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 113 regarding "Support the current review of the FANS program with a focus on legislative amendments to improve the program," before this review is done, I'm wondering about this current cohort of students that are in colleges right now.

Quite often we hear complaints about students panicking, waiting for either accommodations or airline tickets, either to get to the community where they are going to go for college or home for Christmas or after Christmas or at the end of the school year, and I'm wondering what is the current situation with regard to making sure that that doesn't happen when the next flight out from the college to go home is coming up.

Is the department ready to make sure that they're not creating panic attacks? The department does know how many students travelled from home to the college, so they know roughly how many tickets they will need to purchase for the students. Can I get an update on where the department is with this? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We do have a number of interim measures that have taken place for the FANS program. We have hired seven casual staff to, and sorry for the acronym, the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students Division. We have also implemented the new wellness benefit, which we passed here last fall and the students received \$500 for last semester, the Inuit students, and then if they were enrolled this winter semester, they received \$500.

As an interim measure, we also have areas with the comprehensive review of the 35 recommendations that we're looking to come forward with and see what areas we can support. I know that there will be financial implications to fully implement the program and we still have to look at the feasibility of what we can do and it does have to go through the process.

In the past, there was an outside travel agency that did handle the travel portion for students and that is one recommendation that we are looking at. We will have to see if we can do that again, but we are working diligently with this comprehensive review and appreciate everyone that has contributed to the review process and speaking to the hardships or implications that might have occurred to students while they were either going to school or attending school. It is our best focus and aim to improve that program and really enhance it. I really do look forward to this review being underway and

implementing the recommendations that have been brought forward to the best of our ability to support our students.

The travel portion is an area that I do know that was brought forward in several areas and we will come forward to see what we can do on that piece, but we might go with the route of utilizing a contractor again to service the travel portion for students in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those seven casuals the minister referred to, to help out with the processing of the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students program, when were those seven casuals hired? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those positions have been in place for over a year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those positions have been in place for over a year now and it sounds like it's still not good enough. My colleague, Mr. Hickes, had brought this up in previous sittings where there are panic attacks happening and students are not getting their airfare or their meal allowances on time, and students are going a day or two trying to find at least a few dollars to survive and at least get some meals or food in their stomachs, especially if they have kids.

What's the department doing now to address this issue? It has been over a year that these casuals are in their positions, but it's still not good enough. What's the department doing to address the current need now for Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member. This is a complex answer, I think, in terms of improvements because there are 35 recommendations that have been brought forward to improve the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students program and it is going to be a significant funding enhancement. Hopefully, we can move forward with all of the recommendations; however, I don't know at this point if we can. Just based on a cost analysis basis, implementing all the recommendations, we figure, might cost upwards of \$20 million per year to enhance in the ways that have been highlighted.

In terms of the seven positions, I do see that those positions have very much enhanced the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students program because they have a direct worker

that they work with and that the support is there to reach out to the student every two weeks and work directly with their liaison officer to get the documents that they might need or their travel arrangements and those types of things.

I can say that as of last year and looking at the issues that come forward to my office or to the department's attention, those have significantly decreased since I announced that we would be doing this work. Over two years ago in January, we had a large number of requests that came forward shortly after we were elected into our positions and we have seen a significant decrease in those requests. However, they will naturally always be varied. You can't be 100 percent smooth. Sadly, there will always be areas where something might have been missed, but we do look forward to addressing any type of issues that are there. I highly recommend that we have as many of these recommendations roll forward, but I just can't say which ones we will get to implement or fully implement.

In terms of the travel requests, we do look forward to responding better to those requests and I do know that there have been some issues with travel. Hopefully, if we do cost this out and have it go to a third party, we will see improvements because our Financial Assistance for Nunavut staff are doing many different roles and working to meet the needs of the students is our highest priority.

One key area that I would like to mention that will come out of this is that we will have a new database and we have identified the database that we will be using and with that database, I know that it will really significantly improve some of the main areas that have been concerns because right now, that database is not functioning the way that it should. I really look forward to us getting to that point this coming year and coming forward onto the new database will really see big improvements. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Just before I go back to Mr. Simailak, it is for clarification. Minister, you mentioned that the budget would increase by \$20 million. Is that just the FANS budget would increase by \$20 million? Just a clarification on that, Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, that is an estimated cost analysis. The increase is \$20 million; however, that is not on the table for this coming fiscal year, but we will have to see if we can go forward with the full ask of those 35 recommendations and see how many we can do. It is anticipated that this comprehensive review and the recommendations that are brought forward will have a significant dollar figure to significantly improve the changes that are recommended. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister mentioned that the issues with Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students decreased. Does the department have a

number, like two years ago, there were 500 issues and now there are 200 issues? Is there something that she can reference? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the member's question. I don't have a number, but I do know that it has significantly decreased. If memory serves me correct, I had over 20 corresponding emails and letters that when this first became an issue to a handful since the school year started. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm wondering if the department knows that the issues were actually resolved, a majority of them, or did it get to the point where the students just gave up and they just sat back and waited to see if their issues would be resolved, for example, airplane tickets or their meal allowance would be deposited into their bank accounts finally. How does the department know that there actually were some issues resolved? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. We do receive those bring-forwards that come into our office and we do follow through to ensure that they are completed and that the needs are being met.

We do have service standards as well that we utilize and that the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students uses and we have the 15 days from the day the student submits their proof of enrolment to the day that the funds will be deposited back into their account. This is divided into ten business days for the Government of Nunavut tasks and five business days for the bank that the student uses.

In the spring of 2023, the average length of time for the Government of Nunavut to receive the proof of enrolment and send the money to the bank was five business days, which is five business days better than our service standard. The bank then takes between one and five business days to deposit the funds in the student's account. Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, in the spring of 2023, the average length was 3.2 business days. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for your answers there. Before I move on, I would suggest that... . Every student knows when there's a start date and when there's an end date to their college program and when they should be done by, so I would imagine that the airplane ticket would be cheaper if it's purchased at least two weeks prior to when they should be travelling. I strongly encourage them to look at getting these tickets done and out of the way as soon as possible.

I'll quickly ask, moving along, on the same page of 113, it is one bullet above, the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students, just a quick clarification. It's "Support the implementation of a Retention and Recruitment Strategy for Educators with the goal of increasing Inuit and Inuktitut-speaking educators in Nunavut schools." Which Inuit are you referring to? Are you referring to Nunavut Inuit, Nunavut beneficiaries, or is it any Inuk from Inuit Nunangat? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That refers to any educator who is Inuk. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

(interpretation ends) Before I go on to him, I just want clarification again. Minister, you said that you had 20 emails with complaints and it went substantially down. Were there only 20 complaints? I'm just kind of confused. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that question. That's not the official number; however, that's my recollection of how many emails in January 2021, the letters and emails that I received from students or our colleagues here around this House that sent me bring-forwards to investigate and look into and support the students with. The five are roughly about how many have come forward since September 2023. From my recollection, it's a significant decrease. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Following my list of names, Ms. Quassa.

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I only have a few questions, but (interpretation ends) in the business plan on page 113, the last bullet sort of confuses me, so if you can clarify what it really is saying because under the status it says, "A consultation plan for amendments to the *Child Day Care Act* is complete. The Policy and Planning division will continue to support consultations on the Act throughout the winter and spring of 2024."

(interpretation) It sounds like it has been completed, but it looks like there are going to be more consultations. I would like this to be explained. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. The *Child Day Care Act* comes from the Northwest Territories legislation and the Act has not been updated since 1988. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the minister for that clarification. What was the reason why it needs to be improved? Are you trying to make it apply more to Nunavut and how long is it going to take? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. Although this work has not happened and the legislation and the Act come from the Northwest Territories, we do know that there will be transformative change for our Nunavut learning and child care sector with the emphasis on Inuit-centred early learning, which is a priority of this government. To support this, the department is developing new child care legislation that is aligned with the Nunavut vision of early learning and child care and is reflective of our Inuit values and culture. With the updates and the review of the *Child Day Care Act* and regulations, the department will be better able to support the early learning and childhood education centre operators and also improve the quality of standardization across our territory.

We will be undergoing our consultations in April of this year and we will be visiting select communities. If we cannot make it to some communities due to budgetary constraints, we will be posting online radio programs for people to also go online. We have the survey on the Government of Nunavut Department of Education website. It is there and available for those that want to put their input into this Act, as well as we will have paper surveys and we have also consulted with our daycare managers who were here just a couple of weeks ago in Iqaluit. All of the managers from across the territory came together and shared their input on this new Act.

We have already begun the work and look forward to the consultation process and moving forward and bringing this legislation forward to be updated and brought before the House. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank the minister. During the consultations, the interviews that will be taking place, do you know which community they will start from? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that question. At this point, we don't know which communities we're able to visit because we are waiting for travel quotes to come forward and there are budgetary constraints to that work. Hopefully, we can get to as many as we can, but we do have other measures of reaching people with the areas that I shared. I can commit to sharing the information once it does come forward of which communities we will be visiting to our colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe it would be good if we could be notified in advance so that the communities can be prepared for the visits.

Going to another matter, (interpretation ends) in November 2023 the minister tabled her department's Early Learning and Child Care Strategic Plan as well as the Early Learning and Child Care Quality Framework. To date, how has the department collaborated with Inuit organizations to develop and deliver Inuit-centred early learning programs?
(interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that. We are happy that we do have the Nunavut Early Learning and Child Care Quality Framework along with the action plan for inclusion and equity as well as a number of other areas and sectors, such as the wage scale. All of those areas of working under the federal child care agreement and the bilateral agreement that are out there to enhance the early learning and child care sector have been moving forward very successfully.

We do appreciate those funds being there to support the sector and we do have the working group that is there to oversee this work and that it's being implemented in daycare facilities across the territory, as they're run by not-for-profits and by hamlets in some instances as well. We just support them through funding and training and partnership with them to enhance their sector, like with wage scale funds that are out there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms. Quassa (interpretation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is very good to hear. It's real good to hear all the work that is being done out there, especially for the young, growing population. It's good to hear that they are running well.

This will be my last question. (interpretation ends) To date, what progress has been achieved in implementing the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement across all Nunavut communities? (interpretation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, every community, every daycare in our territory, every day home has signed on to utilizing the funds from the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Following my list of names, Mr. Simailak.

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Staying on the subject of *Child Day Care Act* consultations that my colleague was asking about, the minister was talking about getting quotes from airlines for travelling. It seems like the minister is hesitant to say which communities will receive a community consultation. What parameters will the department use to select the communities that will be visited by the consultation team? What parameters are they going to be using or following to decide where the consultation team travels to? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the question. There are a couple of different factors that the department is considering for the *Child Day Care Act* consultations; the first is the community interested in having these consultations happen in their community and also if it's allowable within the budget. Considering that some of this work will have to happen by charter, there are constraints there to those bids that do come forward for the work.

We do want to ensure that we can get to communities based on regions, as well, working with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and our regional Inuit associations and the range of those daycares in our communities, as well as ensuring that we get to different sizes of our communities as well, that we're not just all going to the regional centres, that we're going to the smaller communities as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simailak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, minister, for your response. I can answer one factor that's part of your parameters: Baker Lake is very much interested in having the consultation team visit Baker Lake. I was in contact with the chairperson of the Baker Lake daycare board and they are, in fact, actually working on building a new daycare in Baker Lake. They're also interested in early learning and child education programs that are in place. Baker Lake is very much interested. I do hope that this is a strong sign that the minister will commit to Baker Lake being one of the communities to receive a visit. It's just a quick statement. I'm done. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Minister, if you want to comment on the statement and, if not, then I'll go on. Minister Gross.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for the suggestion and for the information, and we will keep that information noted. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) Just before I go on to the next person on my list, every community does have a scheduled airline flight that goes into the communities. I assume that you might need charters, but every community does have a scheduled airline. Next person on my list: Mr. Lightstone.

Mr. Lightstone: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to make one final comment and recommendation. We have spent the better part of five hours so far on reviewing the department and I do recognize that this is a quarter of a billion dollar budget, but for the size of the department and having nine branches is a bit excessive and I do appreciate all the information I can get and all the information that's provided in the breakdown of nine branches, but I just want to make a recommendation in order to expedite matters.

I would like to recommend that the directorate, the policy and planning, and corporate services be rolled up into one branch, just like the rest of the other departments have their accounting structure chart and their organizational chart organized. Looking at some of these branches, the divisions have one position, two positions. Those are typically sections as opposed to a division. I just want to put that recommendation forward for future review. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. Minister Gross on Mr. Lightstone's recommendation.

Hon. Pamela Gross: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for that. I do know that that is an area that we have heard before and I do know that some divisions do have...there is overlap because they do follow through with similar work within each branch. Yes, we can take a look at that and see if we can collapse some of them because yes, nine branches is a lot, but yes, right now, we're working with what we've got and we will see if we can make improvements. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) I have no more names on my list under Policy and Planning. Education. Branch Summary. Policy and Planning. Total Operations and Maintenance. \$2,873,000. Agreed?

Some Members: Agreed.

Chairman: Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move a motion to report progress.

Chairman (interpretation): Thank you. (interpretation ends) We have a motion on the floor to report progress and that motion is not debatable. All in favour of the motion. Against. The motion is carried. I will now rise to report progress, and the officials may leave the witness table.

Speaker: Item 21. Report of the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Savikataaq.

Item 21: Report of the Committee of the Whole

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

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

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All those in favour. Opposed. The motion is carried.

Item 22. Third Reading of Bills. Item 23. *Orders of the Day*. Mr. Clerk.

Item 23: Orders of the Day

Clerk (Mr. Quirke): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *Orders of the Day* for March 6:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Responses to Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees on Bills and Other Matters
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motions
15. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 37
 - Bill 38
 - Bill 39

- Bill 40
20. Report of the Committee of the Whole
 21. Third Reading of Bills
 22. Orders of the Day

Thank you.

>>*Applause*

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

Sergeant-at-Arms.

>>*House adjourned at 17:53*

Appendix – March 5, 2024



Return to Oral Question

Asked by: Mr. Alex Sammurtok, *MLA for Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet*

Asked of: *Hon. Lorne Kusugak, Minister of Finance*

Number: 738 – 6(2)

Date: February 27, 2024

Subject: *Property Taxes*

Question: Mr. Speaker, if my math is correct, in 2023 property tax rate for residential properties in Nunavut communities outside of Iqaluit increased by a little over 10 percent from the 2022 rate. The rate has increased by just over 60 percent over the last five years.

Can the minister clearly explain how the amount of the most recent increase was determined and can he clearly indicate approximately how much additional tax revenue is expected to be generated by this increase? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And,

The most recent mill rate establishment order indicates that the property tax rate for mining properties also increased by a little over 10 percent. The rate has increased by just over 20 percent over the last five years.

Can the Minister clearly explain how the amount of the most recent increase was determined and can he clearly indicate approximately how much additional tax revenue is expected to be generated by this increase? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Response:

In 2019, the Department of Finance put together a plan to address the growing disparity between the mill rates applied by the City of Iqaluit on properties in Iqaluit (the Municipal Taxation Area, MTA), compared to the mill rates applied by the Government of Nunavut on all properties outside of Iqaluit (the General Taxation Area, GTA). The plan presented to the government of the day was to increase mill rates in the GTA by 10% each year until they reached 50% of the mill rates charged in the MTA. We are still following that plan.

Including the increases to mill rates in 2023, mill rates in the GTA are still far below those charged in the City of Iqaluit, as shown in the table below.

	General Taxation Area	Municipal Taxation Area	%
2023			
Residential single	6.15	20.33	30%
Residential multiplex	6.15	28.46	22%
Commercial	6.15	43.9	14%
Industrial	6.15	48.33	13%

The plan to slowly increase mill rates in the GTA to half of the mill rates in the MTA considers the higher median incomes in Iqaluit, compared to other communities. Mill rates make up a lower portion of median income in the GTA when compared to those charged in Iqaluit, relative to median incomes in that community.

While a 10% year-over-year increase to the mill rate sounds significant, its actual financial impact on homeowners is modest. In financial terms, the increase would see property owners outside Iqaluit pay an additional \$56 for every \$100,000 of their assessed property value. Considering average assessed property values, we estimate the typical household would pay an extra \$43 in 2023 (less than \$4 per month), with the typical total property tax levy growing from \$427 to \$470 per year. In addition to improving taxpayer equity, increasing property tax rates help GN revenues keep pace with expenditure growth.

The 10% increase would lead to a levy worth roughly \$13.5M or a \$1.2M increase in property tax revenues.

The increase to the mill rate on the mining property taxes was based on the current 36 properties in the minerals class at an estimated \$817.7 M assessed value, a 10% increase would increase the property tax burden by roughly \$28,000 per mining property and, on average, an estimated \$307,000 for each of Nunavut's four major mines.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker



Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts

Report on the Review of the 2021-2022 Public Accounts of Nunavut

**2nd Session of the 6th Legislative Assembly of Nunavut
Winter 2024 Sitting**

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George Hicke

Co-Chairperson

Alexander Sammurtok

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Introduction

The Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts held a televised hearing on the most-recently tabled set of public accounts on September 21, 2023.

The standing committee's hearing was held in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly and was televised live across the territory. The hearing was open to the public and news media to observe from the Visitors' Gallery, and was livestreamed on the Legislative Assembly's website. The transcript from the standing committee's hearing is available on the Legislative Assembly's website.

Witnesses appearing before the standing committee included a number of senior officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Government of Nunavut's departments of Finance and Environment. The standing committee notes its appreciation to the witnesses.



Observations and Recommendations

Issue: Commitments to Provide Information

During the televised hearing, witnesses made a number of commitments to provide additional information to the standing committee.

Standing Committee Recommendation #1:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report include the information items that were committed to during the televised hearing of September 21, 2023.

Issue: Budgetary and Financial Management Transparency, Sustainability and Flexibility

The theme of budgetary and financial management transparency, sustainability and flexibility was highlighted on a number of occasions during the standing committee's televised hearing.

In recent years, the Government of Nunavut has expanded its financial reporting beyond the annual main/capital estimates, business plans and public accounts to include an annual "Consolidated Budget of the Government Reporting Entity" and an annual "Mid-Year Fiscal Report". Prior to the standing committee's televised hearing, the Department of Finance provided Members with a document titled *Public Accounts at a Glance*.

On October 24, 2023, the C.D. Howe Institute released its annual *Report Card for Canada's Senior Governments*.¹ The 2023 edition was titled *The ABCs of Fiscal Accountability*. The report awarded Nunavut a C+ grade and noted that:

"Nunavut tabled its budget after the start of the fiscal year and its financial statements were not timely. It released a mid-year fiscal update, an improvement from the previous year, but its update used restated figures in its budget comparison."

It should be noted the 2022 edition of the annual report, which was titled *The Right to Know: Grading the Fiscal Transparency of Canada's Senior Governments*, awarded Nunavut a B+ grade.

Section 44 of the federal *Nunavut Act* provides that:

Submission of Territorial Accounts to Assembly

44. The Commissioner shall, on or before December 31 of each fiscal year, lay before the Assembly a report, called the Territorial Accounts, for the preceding fiscal year of Nunavut, and the Assembly shall consider the report.

Section 74 of the territorial *Financial Administration Act* provides that:

Tabling of Public Accounts

74. Unless the Legislative Assembly otherwise fixes a date, the Public Accounts for the fiscal year must be laid before the Legislative Assembly on or before December 31 following the end of the fiscal year or, if the Legislative Assembly is not then in session, not later than 15 days after the commencement of the next session of the Legislative Assembly.

¹ <https://www.cdhowe.org/public-policy-research/abcs-fiscal-accountability-report-card-canadas-senior-governments-2023>

The dates of tabling of the Public Accounts have been as follows:

Fiscal Year	Date of Tabling in the Legislative Assembly ²
1999-2000	May 29, 2001
2000-2001	May 16, 2002
2001-2002	June 3, 2003
2002-2003	May 21, 2004
2003-2004	December 16, 2005 ³
2004-2005	January 8, 2007 ⁴
2005-2006	March 6, 2008
2006-2007	September 16, 2008
2007-2008	July 31, 2009 ⁵
2008-2009	August 27, 2010 ⁶
2009-2010	April 15, 2011 ⁷
2010-2011	December 19, 2011 ⁸
2011-2012	December 14, 2012 ⁹
2012-2013	December 13, 2013 ¹⁰
2013-2014	November 6, 2014
2014-2015	November 5, 2015
2015-2016	November 7, 2016
2016-2017	November 21, 2017
2017-2018	November 8, 2018
2018-2019	November 6, 2019
2019-2020	November 5, 2020
2020-2021	November 19, 2021
2021-2022	November 8, 2022
2022-2023	NOT YET TABLED
2023-2024	

² Green = Tabled by Statutory Deadline / Red = Not Tabled by Statutory Deadline

³ Backdoor Tabled

⁴ Backdoor Tabled

⁵ Backdoor Tabled

⁶ Backdoor Tabled

⁷ Backdoor Tabled

⁸ Backdoor Tabled

⁹ Backdoor Tabled

¹⁰ Backdoor Tabled

The standing committee is concerned about the failure to table the 2022-2023 Public Accounts prior to the statutory deadline of December 31, 2023.

Testimony provided by the Office of the Auditor General during the standing committee's televised hearing of September 21, 2023, indicated that:

"We wish to draw the Committee's attention to two issues that we have identified through our 2021-2022 governmental and territorial audits and that were part of our presentation deck provided to the Committee in advance of today's meeting. While these were not significant enough to affect our audit opinion on the government's consolidated financial statements, we do believe that they merit the Committee's attention in conducting its oversight of governmental operations.

These issues involve the spare parts and lubricants inventories at the Qulliq Energy Corporation and the write-offs of tangible capital assets. For the spare parts and lubricants inventories, we once again issued a qualified opinion in our independent auditor's report on the Qulliq Energy Corporation's financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2022. This is a long-standing issue that stems from inadequate inventory management practices and significant control deficiencies within the corporation's year-end inventory procedures. These issues increase the risk that these inventories are being mismanaged and are not accurately reflected in the financial statements.

For the write-offs of tangible capital assets, we want to inform the Committee that as a result of requirements set out in the *Financial Administration Act* of Nunavut, management could not write off \$4.1 million of its tangible capital assets. The assets in question were deemed to have no future service potential to the government, but they could not be written off until management was authorized to do so by new legislation passed by the Legislative Assembly. As management had not received the necessary authorization when the financial statements were tabled, the assets were not removed from the consolidated financial statement position, and as a result, both the assets and the annual surplus were overstated. In addition, we wish to inform the Committee that the government is adopting a new accounting standard in 2022-2023 that will require it to record a liability in relation to any legal obligation that will result in future costs when the assets are retired. The new standard is complex and involves the use of estimates and assumptions. We anticipate that the new standard will affect the consolidated financial statements because the government has tangible capital assets that are subject to this standard, such as buildings, equipment, and vehicles. For example, the government may have to remediate buildings with asbestos. The costs of such future legal obligations are known as an asset retirement obligation.

We wish to make the Committee aware of two issues relating to the adoption of the new accounting standard. Firstly, our 2022-2023 independent auditor's report on the financial statements of the Nunavut Development Corporation includes a qualification relating to a scope limitation linked to asset retirement obligations. In other words, the corporation's 2022-2023 consolidated financial statements do not contain complete and accurate information about any potential future asset retirement obligations.

Secondly, the Qulliq Energy Corporation has not yet provided our office with the information we need to audit its asset retirement obligations. The corporation has informed us that it expects to provide the information we have requested at the end of September 2023. I must say that as of today, we're looking forward to that information, but we're not holding our breath. As a result, the corporation missed its statutory reporting deadline for the 2022-2023 financial statements. These circumstances are currently preventing us from assessing the impact on our 2022-2023 audit opinion for the government's liabilities.

The delays in getting this information means that we will issue our audit opinion on the government's consolidated financial statements later than usual, and this situation will affect our ability to support the government in meeting its December 31 statutory deadline. Therefore, the Committee and other informed readers of the government's financial statements might not be receiving timely information for their decision-making processes, such as determining the government's budget and main estimates."

The standing committee notes that the 2023-2024 *Ministerial Letter of Expectation* to the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Qulliq Energy Corporation was tabled in the Legislative Assembly at its sitting of November 3, 2023. The *Ministerial Letter of Expectation* stated, in part, that:

"In the past fiscal year, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada issued a qualified opinion regarding the persistence of inadequate inventory controls. I encourage you to continue working closely with the Office of the Auditor General and management to tighten control procedures and improve financial reporting. You must develop reliable and appropriate count procedures for your inventory to ensure accuracy and efficiency. Looking ahead to 2024-2025, I expect the Qulliq Energy Corporation to have a comprehensive plan outlining how reliable and appropriate controls are implemented throughout the corporation's inventory management system."

On December 15, 2023, the Minister of Finance wrote correspondence to the standing committee indicating that:

“I am writing to advise that the 2022-2023 Public Accounts have yet to be completed and thus, will not meet the statutory deadline of December 31, 2023, as defined in the *Financial Administration Act*. For the past 12 years, since 2010-2011, the Department of Finance has met the deadline to bring forward the Public Accounts by the December deadline.

This year, however, the Public Accounts have been delayed as a result of the Department of Community and Government Services’ ongoing audit of the Petroleum Products Revolving Fund. The Public Accounts cannot be finalized until this audit is completed.

As a result, the Government of Nunavut (GN) will receive a qualification on our audit opinion for a statutory compliance violation. The Auditor-General will advise on our compliance in the new year once our final report has been submitted for their verification.”

Standing Committee Recommendation #2:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut’s response to this report clarify, in detail, the reasons for the failure to table the 2022-2023 Public Accounts prior to the statutory deadline of December 31, 2023.

The standing committee further recommends that the Government of Nunavut’s response to this report include a detailed update on the status of work to finalize and table the 2022-2023 Public Accounts.

The standing committee further recommends that the Government of Nunavut’s response to this report include a detailed update on the status of work to address the Office of the Auditor General’s observations concerning the Qulliq Energy Corporation and the Nunavut Development Corporation.

The standing committee further recommends that the Department of Finance’s publication titled *Public Accounts at a Glance* be made publicly available on its website and updated on an annual basis.

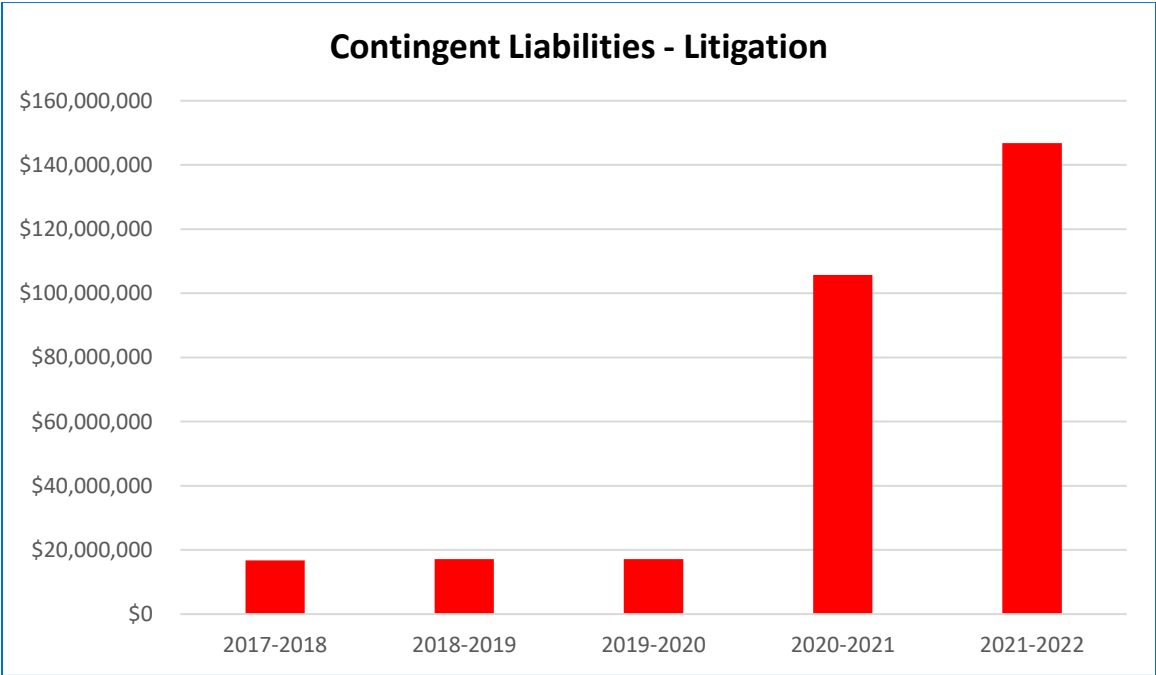
Issue: Risks, Uncertainties and Contingent Liabilities

Note 21 to the 2021-2022 *Public Accounts of Nunavut* indicates that:

“There are a number of claims and threatened litigation cases outstanding against the Government for which the outcomes are not determinable, including a number of cases where an amount is not specified. The nature of these claims include wrongful dismissal, breach of policy, personal injury, sexual abuse, negligence, wrongful arrest and assault. Where it is likely that there will be a future payment and a reasonable estimate of the amount can be made, the Government has recorded a liability. For those pending cases, where the outcome is not determinable as at March 31 and a reasonable estimate of the amount can be made, the total amount of those claims is estimated at \$146,775,000 (2020-2021: \$105,671,000). No liability has been recorded for these claims as the outcome of these cases is not determinable.”

This amount has increased significantly over time and there is little public disclosure concerning the specific matters.

The standing committee recognizes that the annual Public Accounts did not include a specific dollar value for this category of liability until the 2017-2018 fiscal year. The amount has increased as follows:



During the standing committee’s televised hearing of September 21, 2023, Government of Nunavut witness testimony indicated that:

“It’s a tricky balance between disclosure and not putting information out there that could be harmful to the government when it comes to litigation. Obviously, we can’t list individual claims and what were estimated as liabilities because that would give parties on the other side an idea of what we think our risk exposure is. While I appreciate that jurisdictions such as Ontario do into these categories break down a little bit further, they may have hundreds of thousands of litigations in there, whereas if I started to break some of ours down and do four or five categories, I might have one or two litigations in a category. I guess the risk is if we get too specific because of the limited number of claims we might have in a category. We could still be disclosing information we don’t want to, to other parties to the litigation just by virtue of the limited number of claims we have.

It’s certainly something we could discuss with the Department of Justice as far as how much additional disclosure we could give without compromising our legal position. That’s certainly a discussion item that we would be willing to have, but I do know one or two contracts that might be in dispute could have a significant impact on our balance. While amounts may look like they’re growing, it may not be that there is tons of additional litigation; it could just be one or two large contracts that are impacting our liabilities. It’s certainly something that we would be willing to look at and discuss with Justice, but I would caution that there’s only so far we can go just because of the limited number of cases we may have at any one time.”

The 2021-2022 Public Accounts also indicates that one of the most “significant risks and uncertainties” to which the Government of Nunavut is exposed are the:

“Unknown effects of climate change (e.g. infrastructure damage, natural resource development, water shortages, etc.).”

Standing Committee Recommendation #3:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut’s response to this report provide a detailed update on the status of the review undertaken by the Department of Finance and the Department of Justice concerning the disclosure of contingent liabilities in the annual Public Accounts.

The standing committee further recommends that the Government of Nunavut’s response to this report provides a detailed update on the Department of Finance and the Department of Environment’s work to date to address the issue of risks associated with the impact of climate change.

Issue: Accounting Standards and Tangible Capital Assets

Information provided by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada indicates that:

“We wish to highlight the following new accounting standards, which could affect the government’s consolidated financial statements in future years:

- PS 3450—Financial instruments (effective April 1, 2022)
- PS 3280—Asset retirement obligations (effective April 1, 2022)
- PS 3400—Revenue (effective April 1, 2023)”

These standards are approved by the Public Sector Accounting Board, which is an “independent body created to serve the public interest by developing accounting standards for the public sector.”¹¹

Government of Nunavut witness testimony provided to the standing committee during its televised hearing indicated that:

“Regarding asset retirement obligations, the Department of Finance is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the new accounting standard. This process involves educating departments and public agencies on the requirements of the new standard and then working with them on plans and approach to ensure they are able to gather the necessary information to allow for appropriate reporting under the new standard. As this is a new and complex standard, governments and auditors across the country have found it challenging to find the right balance of information-gathering and reporting to satisfy the standard.”

This issue is not confined to Nunavut. Testimony provided on November 24, 2023, to the Yukon Legislative Assembly’s Standing Committee on Public Accounts indicated that:

“This year, the Department of Finance was not able to table the Public Accounts until November 22 due to the fact that the government adopted five new public accounting standards and it ended up taking more time to implement than initially anticipated. The standard that was the main reason for the delay was PS 3280, Asset Retirement Obligations, for which the department has been preparing for over the past few years and has done significant work revising policies, procedures, and databases. So, while the department expected that it would take time to finalize the changes and that there would be some need for adjustments when the Public Accounts were reviewed by the Office of the Auditor General, the department had not expected the delays to the tabling deadlines. Another contributing factor were the four other standards that also had to be adopted in

¹¹ <https://www.frascanada.ca/en/psab/about>

the 2022-2023 fiscal year. They had a less significant financial impact but had more complex and stringent disclosure requirements. All of the changes contributed to the delays.”

Government of Nunavut witness testimony provided to the standing committee during its televised hearing indicated that:

“Currently, the government is in an accumulated surplus position, which means that the value of all the government’s financial and non-financial assets is higher than the value of all its debts. Essentially, this number is one representation of the overall worth or value of the government in financial terms. It is important, however, to understand that this ‘accumulated surplus’ does not represent the amount of money available for reinvestment in programs, services, and infrastructure.

The reason for this is that the government’s assets are represented by a combination of both financial assets, such as cash or accounts receivable, and non-financial assets, the most significant of which is tangible capital assets. Tangible capital assets are the schools, health centres, power plants, and other infrastructure used by the government to provide services to the public. The value of these assets is part of the accumulated surplus and cannot be accessed without selling these facilities.”

Note 18 to the 2021-2022 *Public Accounts of Nunavut* indicates that \$142,413,000 was classified as an “expense” related to the amortization of tangible capital assets during the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

The *Financial Statement Discussion and Analysis* section of the 2021-2022 *Public Accounts of Nunavut* indicates that:

“The Government of Nunavut ratio of net book value to total cost of tangible capital assets continues to decline, indicating assets are getting older. As assets get older, repairs and maintenance costs increase, which results in less funds available for other programs and services. The aging tangible capital asset base also presents a risk to future programs and service delivery as assets become less reliable and the potential for failure increases. The Government of Nunavut is aware of the challenges presented by an aging asset base and continues to actively monitor asset conditions and invest in its tangible capital assets.”

The standing committee notes with concern the implications of this trend in respect to insurance coverage for buildings and major assets.

Standing Committee Recommendation #4:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report provide a detailed update on the status of its work to implement new accounting standards that have been approved by the Public Sector Accounting Board and which came into effect on or after April 1, 2022.

The standing committee further recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report provide a detailed breakdown of its current portfolio of tangible capital assets and a detailed clarification as to how the amount of \$142,413,000 cited in Note 18 to the 2021-2022 *Public Accounts of Nunavut* was calculated.

Issue: Activities of the Contaminated Sites Liabilities Working Group

Information published in the most recently-tabled Public Accounts indicates that one of the most significant risks and uncertainties to which the Government of Nunavut is exposed are “liabilities related to contaminated sites and the use of estimates to determine potential remediation costs.”

The Department of Environment is responsible for the administration of the government’s Contaminated Sites Policy. The policy provides that:

“The Government of Nunavut prepares its financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles for Governments as recommended by the Public Sector Accounting Board of Canada. *PS 3260 – Liability for Contaminated Sites* provides guidance on the recognition and measurement of liabilities for contaminated sites.”

The policy establishes a Contaminated Sites Liabilities Working Group, as well as providing for management of the Government of Nunavut Contaminated Sites Database. During the standing committee’s televised hearing of September 21, 2023, Government of Nunavut witness testimony indicated that:

“There has been a lot of turnover and a lot of change with respect to trying to be consistent in the assessments and ensuring that the information in our database is correct. In that process, we have seen some issues with the inventory and the database, so we have hired a third party to fix the issues and also to implement some fields and drop-down menus that are more compatible with the federal inventory. That’s going to take a little bit of time, but we’re not opposed to making that information public, It’s just that at this moment, we’re sort of trying to fix a bit of a broken house. Once we get it stabilized, then we will definitely have internal discussions about how best to provide some transparency in that regard.”

Standing Committee Recommendation #5:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut’s response to this report provide a detailed update on the activities of the Contaminated Sites Liabilities Working Group for the 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 (to date) fiscal years.

The standing committee further recommends that the Government of Nunavut’s response to this report provide a detailed update on the timeline for making the Government of Nunavut Contaminated Sites Database accessible to the public.

Issue: Comptrollership Branch Priorities and Activities

The Department of Finance's annual business plans indicate that the Financial Reporting and Controls Division of the Comptrollership Branch is "accountable for the preparation and publication of the annual Public Accounts, as required by the *Financial Administration Act*."

Testimony provided by the Office of the Auditor General during the standing committee's televised hearing of September 21, 2023, indicated that:

"Our office has noticed that certain government departments and territorial corporations have experienced high levels of employee turnover and vacancies in key positions, which further increased during the pandemic. As a result, the high level of vacancies inherently increases the risk of fraud or error as it can lead to deficiencies within the internal control environment and have an impact on the successful delivery of programs. We believe this is an important root cause underlying many observations we also reported in our recent performance audits. Governmental representatives have indicated that challenges in securing staff housing can have a significant impact on the ability to attract potential candidates."

The standing committee shares this concern. The Government of Nunavut's most recently-published quarterly employment report indicated that there was a government-wide vacancy rate of 36.4% as of June 30, 2023. The Department of Finance's vacancy rate was 40.9%.

The standing committee recognizes that the Department of Human Resources' annual business plans have indicated that one of its priorities has been to finalize a new *Human Resource Strategy*. The *2019-2023 Human Resource Strategy* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on November 3, 2020.

The department's recent annual business plans indicate that its priorities for the 2022-2023 fiscal year were to:

- "Collaborate with all departments to develop a comprehensive Accounts Receivable collection strategy;
- In collaboration with the Department of Health, develop an employee survey for employee medical travel to help improve effective delivery of the benefit and to reduce controllable expenses;
- Roll out the Financial Management Development Program;
- Procure an Enterprise Resource Planning system;

- Implement an electronic signature system for the Government of Nunavut;
- Review and revise the Government of Nunavut's approach to honoraria payments under Financial Administration Manual Directive 810: Honoraria;
- Update the Government of Nunavut's approach to grants and contributions, through a review of Financial Administration Manual Directive 801: Grants and Contributions; and
- Conduct an operational review of the Internal Audit Division and its functions.”

The department's annual business plans indicate that its priorities for the 2023-2024 fiscal year have been to:

- “Develop a strategy to link existing public service training with financial management training activities;
- In consultation with the Department of Health, develop an employee survey for employee medical travel to guide improvements in program delivery;
- Initiate GN-wide review of Specimen Signature records;
- Develop a program to support professional finance and accounting designations for new and existing employees across government; and
- Roll out the Enterprise Resource Planning system with increasing focus on training, testing, design, and implementation.”

On July 24, 2023, the Department of Finance issued *Request for Proposals 2023-42: Financial Reporting and Auditing Services - Assistance with the Public Accounts and Internal Audits*. The RFP closed on August 25, 2023. On December 8, 2023, the department issued its Award List, which included four proponents.

Standing Committee Recommendation #6:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report provide a detailed update on the status of the Comptrollership Branch's work to implement business plan priorities for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 fiscal years.

The standing committee further recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report include a detailed update on work performed to date by proponents pursuant to *Request for Proposals 2023-42: Financial Reporting and Auditing Services - Assistance with the Public Accounts and Internal Audits*.

The standing committee further recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report provide a detailed breakdown of the employment status of all positions in the Department of Finance's Comptrollership Branch.

The standing committee further recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report provide a detailed update on the status of the development of the *2024-2028 Human Resource Strategy* in respect to the recruitment and retention of financial management professionals.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, the standing committee looks forward to holding a televised hearing later in 2024 on the next set of Public Accounts. This hearing is anticipated to allow for detailed consideration of a number of emerging issues and themes, including:

- Results of audits of the Petroleum Products Revolving Fund and the Petroleum Products Stabilization Fund;
- Enhancement of transparency in respect to reporting of territorial tax revenues associated with the natural resources extractive sector;
- Impact of the recently-signed *Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement* on reporting of territorial royalty revenues and liabilities in respect to contaminated sites;
- Expansion of the range of electronic formats in which the Government of Nunavut's financial reporting publications and data are made publicly available (e.g. .csv data files) and achievement of greater alignment of, and consistency between, figures and formats in the Public Accounts and other publications, including annual reports on grants and contributions expenditures, contracting, procurement and leasing activities; and
- Lapses in respect to departmental grants and contributions budgets.