

Partners in development

Due to its geography, climate, culture and language, Nunavik is part of the Arctic world. Covering 500 164 square kilometres, Nunavik represents 36% of the total area of Quebec. All located north of the 55th parallel, along the Ungava Bay, Hudson's Straight and Hudson Bay coasts, none of the 14 Nunavik municipalities are connected by road, and there are no road links to the south of the province. The region has a wealth of mineral and wildlife resources of all kinds and possesses some of the most picturesque tourist attractions. The main rivers of the territory and their watersheds represent a potential of approximately 8 000 megawatt and is the equivalent of 25 % of the Quebec's current installed capacity. In years to come, these assets should give rise to projects likely to have an impact on the region and play a pivotal role as a lever for economic development.

Some 11 000 people live in Nunavik and 90% of them are Inuit and speak Inuttitut as their first language. Our statistics show that the population's growth rate is 2,6 % per year with 60 % of the population under 25 years of age. Life expectancy is 69 years for women in Nunavik compared to 81 years elsewhere in Quebec, and 62 years for men in Nunavik compared 74 in Quebec. Nunavik has on of the highest under-employment rate in Quebec while average family income is the lowest.

The Inuit are integrated in Quebec and Canada's legal, administrative and tax regimes. and unlike other Native groups living in Quebec, they pay all federal and provincial sales and income tax on the same basis as other citizens of Quebec and Canada and are entitled to demand from the governments the same services as are offered to citizens in other regions of Quebec. In fact, the cost of goods being more expensive due to transportation cost, Nunavik residents pay proportionately more in consumer taxes then anybody else in Quebec.

Despite being located near huge hydroelectric generating facilities, the communities of Nunavik are not connected to the Quebec electrical grid. The cost of electricity provided by local diesel generators is a limiting factor for economic development. This circumstance also adds substantially to the operating budgets of municipalities. There are no underground piping systems to deliver water. Instead, pump trucks transport water to each house from the local water treatment plant. Sewage is removed by truck from holding tanks in the sub-flooring of houses. There is no public transportation system in the region, as well as no Internet providers. Residents must pay high long distance rates and endure extremely low data speeds in connecting with Internet service providers located in Montreal or Quebec.

The cost of living in Nunavik is in no way comparable to that of other regions of Quebec. A study conducted by the Laval University GÉTIC (Groupe d'études inuit et circumpolaires) indeed confirmed that food prices are 69% higher in Nunavik compared to elsewhere in Quebec, with cleaning supplies 78% higher, and personal care products 79% higher. In fact, the portion of household expenses allotted to groceries reaches 44%

of the overall family budget in Nunavik (a proportion observed in developing countries) as compared with 12% in the Quebec City region. As another example, the price of gasoline in Nunavik is \$ 1.20 per litre.

Although Nunavik today is the most underdeveloped region in Quebec with respect to infrastructures and economic development, with its cultural heritage, its traditional hospitality, its hydroelectric, mineral and tourism potential, it should be at the heart of Quebec's economic development for decades to come.

In order to better define the priorities of the region in terms of community and economic development, the Katujiniq Regional Development Council (KRDC) has elaborated the Kativik Regional Development Strategy and organized the Katujiniq socio-economic conference in April 2000 in Kuujuaq. All regional organizations have participated to the elaboration of the strategy and some 300 delegates from the 14 communities of Nunavik and Inuit representatives from Chisasibi have attended the one-week conference to examine all aspects of regional development affecting the life of Nunavik residents. The communities were given the opportunity to present their development plans and representatives from various sectors of community life identified priorities that the region should work on in the coming years. The information gathered from both the strategy and the conference has guided the region in identifying the priorities in socio-economic development.

Municipal domain

The government must provide the municipalities and the Kativik Regional Government with the means in terms of infrastructures, equipment, technical and administrative support and operating funds that will enable them to fulfil the powers included in the Act respecting the Northern villages and the Kativik Regional Government.

Health

The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services aims at providing health care services that are comparable to those offered in other regions of Quebec. To meet this objective, NRBHSS will need additional financial resources to expand the present regional hospitals, to repatriate specialized services, to acquire specialized equipment and develop prevention programs in fields such as suicide, substance abuse and conjugal violence. Funding is also required to train more Inuit in health related careers such as nurses, social workers, mental health workers, etc. and to develop assistance programs for handicapped people and to support the construction of elders home.

Education

The region aims at providing adequate education to its young population in order to foster self-esteem and prepare them to integrate the Nunavik employment market. School curriculum and adult education programs must be tailored to community needs. High school education should be available within the region. The school system must access

funding in order to develop Inuit culture and language teaching material that is inspired from Inuit traditional knowledge. Because of the lack of community infrastructures, Nunavik schools must be equipped with a double gymnasium. Governments must acknowledge that the growing population will impact on infrastructures requirements and the operating costs of the system and the relocation of the head offices of the KSB will command increasing financial resources for the coming years.

Culture and Elders

The preservation and fostering of the region's rich and unique culture, language and Inuit way of life is a first regional objective. The Inuttit language must be preserved, protected, enriched and promoted. Of all the aboriginal languages spoken in Canada Inuttit is the one used by the most people. Inuit culture components must be integrated in every aspect of life from sports, games, education, training, and research. Elders feel that they are not part of the community modernization process. Many of today's elders were young adults when they moved in the 14 communities leaving behind their birthplaces, traditional camping grounds and nomadic way of life. Youth and Elders must together develop programs to close the gap that has been created over the years. Elders' homes must be built in communities and elder's conferences held on a more frequent basis. The Avataq Cultural Institute must be financed in order to answer the needs in the field of culture and archeological research in a more adequate way.

Employment

The Kativik Regional Government manages most of the employment and training programs and funds available from both governments. KRG will continue to adapt the programs to the needs of the region and encourage the young Inuit to stay in school and pursue their education to college and university levels.

56 % of the Inuit of working age are not working. The average Nunavik under-employment factor is 26 % while it is of 13 % for Quebec. More than 60 % of employment opportunities are in the public and para-public sectors while 36 % of all full time jobs are in the private business and cooperatives sector, the Federation of Cooperatives (FCNQ) being the largest employer of Inuit in the region (13 % of all jobs). The challenge is then to create jobs in the private sector, to develop specialized manpower, to hire as many Inuit as possible in the public and para-public sector and to adapt the training programs to regional organizations and private sector needs.

Communications

Reliable communications are essential in all communities and local radio stations play a crucial role in keeping the population informed. Adequate access to Internet throughout the region is a very high priority for organizations, businesses and individuals. The communities need more powerful radio transmitters and equipment, funding for the operation of radio stations and an access to Internet. Inuit employees involved in the

telecommunications sector require more training and technical assistance to provide a better service throughout the region.

Housing

Taking into account the growth rate of the Nunavik population, the region's priority is to ensure that both levels of government continue to recognize Nunavik urgent needs in housing. Innovative home ownership programs including "rent to purchase of existing social housing" must be developed as alternatives to social housing and stimulate the development of a private housing market throughout the region. As it is the case in other regions of Quebec, the construction of houses must generate local and regional economic spin-offs.

Land use and Environment

The management of the land above the 55th parallel is under the jurisdiction of various authorities: the Quebec government, the Kativik Regional Government, the northern villages and the Land Holding Corporations. The region must be consulted when major development takes place in the region. All major development projects should be subject to the Environmental review process foreseen in the JBNQA and create economic spin-offs, contract and employment opportunities for the Nunavik population. The Kativik Environmental Advisory Committee (KEAC) and the Kativik Environmental Quality Commission (KEQC) must be properly funded to allow the Inuit to fulfil their role in the review of projects. A mechanism must be put in place to enable the Kativik Regional Government to participate to the issuing of licences of permits for development on category II and III lands. This would benefit both, Nunavik and Quebec. The Quebec Government must provide to the KRG all the funding necessary to clean all 600 abandoned mining sites inventoried by the Laval University at Summer 2000.

Renewable resources and Wildlife

The Inuit have historically depended from the harvesting of renewable resources. Projects related to the management of renewable resources must be developed and funded. The devolution of research programs to the Nunavik Research Centre and the funding of the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Committee (HFTA) are issues of concerns for the Inuit in this regard. The creation of new employment opportunities in caribou commercialization, fisheries and fish hatchery projects could be substantial and contribute to the economic development of the region. Sports hunting and fishing activities must be better monitored throughout the territory. Funding should be made available for KRG to hire additional conservation officers.

Justice

In 1993, the Inuit Justice Task Force established by Makivik Corporation in 1990, had tabled its Report "Blazing the trail to a better future". Very little of this report has been implemented to date. The needs and cultural traditions of the Inuit should be integrated in

the administration of the Justice system with regards to preventive measures, law enforcement, correctional and post-correctional services. Appropriate detention facilities, halfway houses and courthouses must be established in the region.

Women

Women play a very important role in many aspects of Nunavik community life. They help at the transfer of traditional knowledge: taking care of animal skins, sewing, etc. They sew and cook for the elders, widows, and children in need. They are often called upon to help those suffering from violence, and mental or spiritual problems. Elsewhere in Quebec, similar groups often raise funds from the community, the region or the private sector. The small population of the Nunavik communities and the under-developed private business sector make it impossible for these groups to raise enough funds. The Nunavik Women Association and local women groups must be provided with funding to pursue their mission and buildings where to work.

Childcare

The development of childcare services in all 14 northern villages of Nunavik over the past five years stands as a success story for the Kativik Regional Government. It is the demonstration that pulling together the financial resources from the federal, provincial, regional and local governments can generate sustainable socio-economic development. The construction of 14 daycare centres, the creation of 872 places in daycares and of approximately 200 full time jobs out of which 60 benefited from training through the KRG regular programs and the signing of long term contribution agreement transferring to KRG the management of nearly all aspects of the delivery of childcare services is the demonstration that when the will is there, a lot can be done in little time. The region must now secure funds to cope with the demand of a growing population and with the integration of new programs likely to promote the Inuit culture in all aspects of the services provided in daycares.

Youth

Considering that 75 % of the population is under the age of 35 years of age, it is imperative to integrate the youth in the regional decision making process. The Saputiit Youth Association is now invited to sit on regional boards or councils. With the funding allocated following the Quebec Youth Summit in 2000, the association will be able to develop activities in all communities of Nunavik. The Saputiit Youth Association has prioritized the construction of a Youth centre in each community.

Recreation

The regional organizations of Nunavik promote the benefits of recreation on the health, culture and traditions, well being and self-esteem of the Nunavik population but never had the financial means to offer the activities that the population should be entitled to access. Nunavik stands far behind other regions of Quebec in terms of recreational

infrastructures. The sector was never properly funded from the infrastructures, technical support and operational funds standpoint. By government standards, it has never been a priority. In 2000, there was still no cultural centre, library and indoor swimming pool in the region. All infrastructures in place, arenas and community centres were built by the Makivik Corporation and in Kuujjuaq, by Kuujjuamiut Inc. They all need improvements. The amount of \$ 75 000 is given to technical support for the organization of activities is not sufficient. Recurrent funding must be secured to enable Nunavik athletes to participate to the Arctic winter games.

Traditional economy

The Inuit traditional economy is an integral part of the Inuit way of life and of the current economy of the region. The fabrication and sale of clothing, tools and equipment and the production of arts, crafts, and country food products could create jobs and provide a source of revenues to a large portion of the population. The high cost of fuel, equipment and transportation prevent the Inuit from developing this sector of the economy. The Inuit organizations must work with governments at reducing the impacts of the transportation costs on this economic activity by securing transportation subsidies to offset the high cost of inter-community air transportation of goods. Inuit should also benefit from tax exemptions when they purchase goods used in the traditional economy.

Modern economy

As it is the case for the traditional economy, the high cost of living prevents from developing a sustainable modern economy in Nunavik. On one hand, the low purchasing power of the population, on the other, the high cost of goods produced or sold in the region, affect the performance of all businesses, and are the main cause for business failures. The region must work towards the creation of transportation subsidies that will reduce the cost of goods sold in Nunavik and businesses must have priority of contracts over those operating from the south when bidding on contracts in Nunavik.

Business development

Within the human resources and financial means available, businesses from Nunavik can receive technical support through business planning, market analysis, feasibility studies and identification of appropriate financing programs at the federal and provincial governments levels. They can also access financial support through loans and contributions for start-up and expansion. Existing businesses can also avail themselves of aftercare and monitoring services such as administrative training, financial analysis and strategic planning.

Each year, the region identifies objectives likely to stimulate the creation of new businesses and, sustain and enhance the economic development. Of all the obstacles that private entrepreneurs must overcome, the absence of banking services in 13 out of 14 Nunavik communities is probably the most important. In 2001, the region's objectives were to:

- foster the creation of community-based businesses such as subsidiaries of the Landholding Corporation;
- promote joint ventures in order to leverage investment for large-scale projects and to assist in the transfer of technology and management skills between Inuit entrepreneurs and southern businesses;
- enhance value added through the research and development of new products and services;
- promote Nunavik-made products and services as well as the region as a whole through the creation of an Internet portal with web pages for all Nunavik organizations and businesses;
- promote careers in economic and community development, and where possible hire Inuit studying in the south.

Of course, over and above these, the development of the tourism potentials of the region and the expansion of the transportation sector continue to be priorities for Nunavik

Nunavik Churches

Churches are partners in the development social harmony. They help in counselling. The participants at the Katutjiniq conference feel that churches of different denominations should work together. The renovation and replacement of church buildings that, in some cases, no longer meet safety standards is a priority for that sector.

Makivik Corporation's contribution to the development of Nunavik communities

During the past 25 years, in the absence of government funding, Makivik Corporation has spent approximately \$ 65 Million of its heritage fund since the signing of the JBNQA in order to help community and economic development. Community centres and arenas were built in every community. FM Radio stations, sewing and carving shops were recently built and contributions were made towards the construction of double gymnasiums in some communities. Communities were equipped with vehicles to assist the transportation of elders. Makivik Corporation has also expended \$ 5 million in the development of daycare centres. It has funded organizations such as the Avataq Cultural Institute, the Taqramiut Inc., the Landholding Corporations, the Nunavik Tourism Association, the Saputiit Youth Association, local women groups, etc. Every year, through its subsidiary companies, it provides discounts for the transportation of students participating to cultural exchanges, educational trips and sports tournaments.

Conclusion

The Inuit will then need the financial resources in order to meet the needs expressed by the representatives of various development sectors during the Katutjiniq conference. On the one hand, governments will have to work at the implementation of the JBNQA by fulfilling their obligations. On the other hand, if we all agree that Nunavik will be at the heart of Quebec's development over the coming years, governments will also have to

consider providing the region with the administrative and political means to participate fully to the exercise of socio-economic development. It cannot be a one-way process. One could consider the creation of a specific administrative region and the creation of an electoral district for Nunavik as a mean to achieve this objective. The Inuit would then have a chance to express their views and be part of decision-making. We could then talk of a true Quebec – Nunavik Partnership.

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