



FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

CNW CODE 01

REGION 10 (NORTHERN QUÉBEC) CODE 44

Follow-up on the Katimajit Conference

**THE COMMITMENTS IN THE TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING FIELD
WILL BE FULFILLED**

Montréal, March 6, 2009. — Inuit leaders and representatives of the governments of Québec and Canada today took part in the follow-up meeting on the Katimajit conference. According to the participants, the progress achieved on the commitments made in the transportation and housing fields is very encouraging.

- **Transportation**

It should be recalled that in 2007, the Government of Québec earmarked major sums to reduce the cost of transporting people and goods in Nunavik. It also made a commitment to improve Puvirnituq airport in order to permit the introduction of a jet service. The cost of the project – which entails extending the runway, relocating the lighting system, expanding the traffic area as well as the construction of an airport terminal and a garage – is estimated at \$30 million.

The contracts for the expansion of the traffic area funded by the programs of the Ministère des Transports du Québec have been awarded and the work will begin this May. Today, we wish to confirm that the governments of Québec and Canada have agreed to jointly fund the entire project.

"This priority project, combined with the \$1.4 million announced by our government last year for the redevelopment of the traffic area of Puvirnituq airport, shows our desire to contribute to the well-being of the region's residents. The acceleration and expansion of the recent federal investments in the infrastructures field, through the historic injection of close to \$12 billion over two years, will stimulate our economy and will contribute to the creation of thousands of jobs across the country," emphasized Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

"This agreement allows us to move forward with the important project for the Inuit community. Our objective is to make the jet service available in Puvirnituq beginning in December 2009, and we will proceed with the reconstruction of the airport terminal in 2010. Through this commitment, we are clearly showing our desire to improve the quality of life of the population of Nunavik by allowing it to acquire modern transportation infrastructures," explained Norman MacMillan, Minister for Transport.

- **Housing**

A housing agreement reached between Nunavik, Canada and Québec, within the context of the implementation of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA), was signed in 2000 and renewed in 2005. Negotiations are under way in preparation for the entry into force of a new agreement in April 2010. The work carried out in relation to these negotiations will notably consist of making additional independent analyses of housing deficiencies and demographic growth.

Canada also offers Nunavik, by way of the Affordable Housing Initiative, the 2006 Off-Reserve Housing Trust and the Affordable Housing Trust, housing assistance by allocating funds intended to maintain close to 1700 social housing units.

"We recognize the importance of safe, suitable and affordable housing for improving the living conditions of individuals and families," stated Minister Strahl. "The Government of Canada, through its investments in housing, is working to offer support to the most vulnerable individuals in our society and is helping them to succeed."

The Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ), concerned about the current shortage of housing in Nunavik, has reiterated its commitment to building 50 social housing units. They will be in addition to the some 326 housing units that the SHQ is already building with its Inuit and federal partners under the five-year multipartite agreement 2005-2010. Moreover, aware that the simple renewal of the five-year agreement, under the same conditions, will not make it possible to make up for the lack of housing observed in Nunavik, Québec and Canada intend to actively work together, in the upcoming months, among other things, to announce the holding of the Housing Forum this May in Nunavik, in order to substantially improve the housing situation by 2015.

Moreover, with a view to improving the current state of the existing housing stock in Nunavik, the financial commitments of the SHQ have practically tripled, rising from \$53 million to \$135 million for the period from 2008 to 2010. Finally, to meet the needs expressed by Nunavik households, the Société is currently working on improving the Affordable Housing Québec program, Kativik region section.

Yves Bolduc, Minister of Health and Social Services, Lise Thériault, Minister for Social Services, and Nathalie Normandeau, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Regions and Land Occupancy, heard the representatives of Nunavik on the subject of their infrastructure needs for individuals confronted with special health problems. For this purpose, the former Kangiqsualujjuaq school will be converted into a multifunctional services centre. This is a \$3.8 million project being carried out jointly by these two departments, which will ensure that the current residents will be relocated.

"We are very concerned about the specific housing situation in Nunavik and the ensuing challenges. We want to act as quickly as possible by improving the financial investment earmarked for the construction of new housing units and the renovation of existing ones. Given the scope of the needs, we will combine our efforts, i.e. those of the federal government and Québec, in order to provide suitable housing to the families and households of the Inuit communities. We feel that we have a social responsibility to meet such basic needs. The future of an entire generation of young Inuit people is at stake," stated Nathalie Normandeau, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Regions and Land Occupancy.

Sources :

Kitty Gordon
Communications Officer
Makivik Corporation
514 745-8880

Nina Chiarelli
Press Secretary
Office of the Minister of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development
819 997-0002

Kevin Bilodeau
Press Secretary
Office of the Minister responsible
for Aboriginal Affairs
418 646-9131

Robert Mackey
Communications Officer
Kativik Regional Government
819 964-2961