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REGION 10 (NORTHERN QUÉBEC) CODE 44

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**Follow-up on the Katimajit conference**

**CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IN THE FIELDS OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES, EDUCATION  
AND MITIGATING THE COST OF LIVING**

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**Montréal, March 6, 2009.** — The stakeholders of the Katimajit conference met today, as agreed upon in 2007, to evaluate the progress of their vast operation seeking to ensure the socioeconomic development of Nunavik. They notably addressed the commitments made in Kuujuaq in the health, social services and education field. The question of the cost of living in Nunavik was also discussed. In the opinion of the spokespersons responsible for these fields, the findings are very encouraging.

**Health and social services**

- **Youth Protection**

Lise Thériault, Minister for Social Services, indicated that youth protection was an issue of concern on the territory of Nunavik. "We want to improve the well-being of families and children. It is for this reason that our government has been particularly active in this field by reinforcing youth protection services and front-line services." As a result, the region now has 14 additional youth protection officers and the money required for their continuing education will be offered to them. This commitment alone represents an investment of close to \$2 million per year. To this group must be added 5 professional workers, 2 Inuit workers and a clinical supervisor for front-line social services.

The Government of Québec has also chosen to consolidate the organization of family and youth services through the creation of a regional youth rehabilitation office placed under the responsibility of the Tulattavik Health Centre. With the financial assistance of the Government of Québec, the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services will be able to hold a regional consultation on the subject of traditional adoptions.

- **Community mobilization, dependencies and violence**

With the funding granted for the hiring of 14 Inuit community workers as well as for the activities of the health committees, each community will be able to mobilize in order to find potential solutions to deal with social problems more effectively.

In this same perspective, the Government of Québec has also increased the funding granted to the Isuarsivik Treatment Centre so that it can develop a regional mandate in order to meet the needs of all of the communities, as well as a specific intervention mandate with young people. Finally, the funding of three shelters for women who are victims of domestic abuse and their children has also been increased.

- **Multifunctional accommodation centre**

Moreover, Doctor 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, announced the conversion of a building located in Kangiqsualujjuaq into a multifunctional accommodation centre.

The new centre will include eleven housing units for seniors who are autonomous or coping with a loss of autonomy, five accommodation units for people with a disability and two adapted transition units. These latter units will be made available to people who are in convalescence, awaiting the adaptation of their home or victims of violence or abuse. There are also plans to set up common areas, notably community rooms with kitchenettes.

This \$3.8 million project is funded in equal proportion by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux and the Ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l'Occupation du territoire.

- **Housing for staff and administrative premises**

Lodging the staff members that work for the health services and social services spread out over the territory of Nunavik represents an essential need that must be met. The Government of Québec recognizes this fact. That is why, given the importance of providing suitable accommodation for the staff working in Nunavik, the government invested, in 2008, \$19.4 million for the construction of 54 housing units.

"We had promised 50 and we have built 54! This testifies to the interest that our government shows in the needs of the people of Nunavik," stated Yves Bolduc, Minister of Health and Social Services.

## **Education**

Michelle Courchesne, Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport, also made a positive assessment of the actions taken following Katimajit.

She notably emphasized the efforts made to increase the number and the quality of sports infrastructures on the territory of the Kativik School Board. The Government of Québec has invested close to \$16.5 million to upgrade and add arenas, gymnasiums and swimming pools for the benefit of the Inuit populations. In this respect, the Government of Québec salutes the initiative of Joé Juneau who has established a program seeking to stimulate education among Inuit youth.

"I consider that we can be proud of the work accomplished to date, since all of the projects on which we are working together are proceeding smoothly. The success of young people is at the heart of the government's concerns. I am not talking here only about success at school, even though it is very important, but also about success in terms of developing the full potential of each individual," she said.

## **Cost of living**

The participants at the follow-up meeting also examined the question of the cost of living in Nunavik. They stated that they were satisfied with the way the work has gone and optimistic about the progress made in this respect.

"The Government of Canada has put in place measures to reduce the difficulties related to the cost of living experienced by residents of the North and Canadians living in remote

areas," stated Minister Strahl. "We understand that access to healthy and affordable food is a major factor for improving the quality of life, nutrition and health of the isolated communities of the North. We are currently examining the Food Mail program to determine if it is the most effective way of resolving the problem of the high cost of food in this region of Canada. In 2008, we also increased by 10 % the tax credit granted to residents of remote areas. These initiatives and others included in Canada's Economic Action Plan will contribute to greatly reducing the cost of living for all Canadians."

Following the commitments made at the Katimajit conference, the Government of Québec earmarked a sum of \$12.1 million, spread out over three years, to reducing the cost of transporting people and goods, all means of transportation combined. Finally, in its 2007-2008 budget, the Ministère des Finances du Québec had included a refundable tax credit, intended for individuals living in northern villages and applied retroactively to 2006: an improvement evaluated at \$700,000 per year.

"After a few months, the assessment is positive. Indeed, we have made considerable improvements to various fields that affect living conditions in Nunavik. In the communities, for example, stores are beginning to offer food and everyday consumption items at better prices. It is clear that in the daily lives of the Inuit, this makes a difference," emphasized Pierre Corbeil, Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs.

The Minister recalled that in the wake of the Katimajit conference a new working group on the reduction of the cost of living in Nunavik was set up. Made up of representatives of the two main Inuit organizations and six departments and organizations of the Government of Québec, its mandate consists of making an assessment of the actions taken to date and making recommendations for the future.

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