

## **MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

### **COUNCIL OF COMMISSIONERS – DECEMBER 03 - 06, 2024 | MONTREAL**

**The Commissioners were briefed on the progress of the Sivumuattiit consultations. They expressed support for the vision of student success that has emerged from activities held with both employees and secondary-level students during the "Listening" phase since the start of the school year. So far, a total of 190 students have been consulted, along with more than 750 employees and Nunavik residents, during 10 separate events.**

In November, Sivumuattiit entered the "Visioning" phase, during which a shared vision of priorities for student success will be co-created through consultations with staff, students, and Nunavik residents.

Launched in June 2024, Sivumuattiit is a 4-phase strategic planning process. It spans a period of one year, and the result will guide our work over the next five years. Through inclusive consultations, Sivumuattiit re-imagines ways to support Nunavik students on their path to success.

So far, the team leading the Sivumuattiit consultations observed that the participatory process contributes to creating a safe space for participants to express their views and hopes; building transparency within the organization; fostering collaboration and peer support among staff; empowering participants; and reinforcing cultural awareness.

The Sivumuattiit team also reported that student participation was particularly successful. Youth expressed joy and happiness in various ways throughout the in-community activities as well as during the multi-community activities. Connecting schools across all Nunavik communities also connected remote family members, creating a very special moment for many students who expressed gratitude for it.

It should also be noted that although community members were invited to participate in the three separate events so far (Kuujuuaq in October, Ivujivik in October, and all villages in November), very few Nunavimmiut participated. Most of the participants were former education sector employees or employees of partner organizations.

**In the context of the implementation of Law 14 by the Quebec government, the Council of Commissioners of Kativik Ilisarniliriniq has sought legal counsel to explore options for securing a full exemption for Inuit beneficiaries. It is clear to the Council that Law 14 is in breach of JBNQA rights, which violates the treaty-based right of Kativik school graduates to pursue post-secondary studies elsewhere in Quebec in the language of their choice.**

Law 14 undermines student success at the postsecondary level. Kativik Ilisarniliriniq (KI) seeks a full exemption for Inuit beneficiaries. This year, we have seen the negative repercussions of Law 14 among the Inuit students sponsored by KI for studies at the college level. Some students felt so discouraged by the requirement to take additional French courses that they dropped out of their programs, while others persevered, failing their courses or passing them with very low grades that

affect their CRC (cote R), lowering their chances of being admitted to competitive university programs offered by English universities in Quebec.

Between May 2021 and June 2022, KI expressed its concerns to MEQ officials at various levels: Minister of Higher Education Pascale Dery, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education Marie-Josée Blais, Directors, and at the working level with numerous MEQ staff. We also voiced our concerns on multiple occasions during meetings with Minister Lafrenière.

Our MEQ interlocutors expressed support for our demand of a full exemption from Law 14 requirements for all Inuit beneficiaries. So did Minister Lafrenière. Nevertheless, by the beginning of May 2022, no progress had been made. KI wrote twice to Premier Legault, but received no response.

In May 2023, the Quebec government introduced regulations that are administratively complicated (both for Nunavimmiut and for CÉGEPs), temporary, restrict eligibility, and generally fail to protect the rights of all Inuit beneficiaries under the JBNQA.

In Nunavik schools, the language of instruction is Inuktitut, with French and English taught as second languages. Over the past 10 years in the youth sector, about half of our students were enrolled in the French sector, while the other half took English as a second language. Students enrolled in the French sector are more successful in obtaining their DES. For example, in 2023, 47% of our students were enrolled in the French sector, and 56% of our high school graduates came from the French sector. There were 3,499 students in the youth sector in 2023-2024.

Although the majority of Nunavik high school graduates were enrolled in the French sector, only six individuals have graduated from a French college since 2016. What we see is that most Nunavimmiut who pursue post-secondary education choose to do so in English. Their right to do so is protected under the JBNQA, and Law 14 breaches this treaty right.

At the post-secondary level, we also see that out of 149 sponsored students, 120 are registered with English institutions at the vocational, college and university levels. While we understand that the Quebec government is seeking to protect French language through Law 14, it is clear that these 120 students do not pose a serious threat to the French language. This is especially true when we know that more than 90% of them return to Nunavik after graduation.

It is essential for the future of Nunavik that more Inuit have access to jobs requiring college or university training. Currently, Law 14 is preventing Nunavimmiut from achieving this goal.

**Reacting to the activity report presented by the Human Resources department, the Commissioners expressed concerns about the institutional challenges resulting from continuous staff turnover at all levels of the organization. Equally concerning, is the increasing number of teachers who do not hold a Quebec teaching license. In the English sector, the rate of non-holders is approaching that of the Inuktitut sector, which has historically been the highest among KI's teaching personnel.**

Between April 16 and September 30, 2024, KI recruited a total of 343 new employees. Out of these, 135 were teachers recruited for the adult and youth

sectors, both within Nunavik communities and outside Nunavik. The remaining 208 employees recruited were managers, professionals, and support staff.

While staff turnover remains an issue, career advancement opportunities also contribute to staff retention, with 77% of management positions being filled with internal candidates.

The Council expressed continued support for the current planning of a full-time teacher training program that would be offered in Nunavik (Kuujuuaq), in collaboration with a partner university. This new program would not target currently employed teachers but would be open to Nunavik residents interested in joining the teaching profession. It would complement existing programs that are offered to KI employees already working as teacher trainees or teachers.

With the number of teachers who don't hold a Quebec teaching license in the French and English sectors, the Commissioners discussed available options to ensure on-the-job training for these employees. Additional resources would be needed to answer emerging needs that co-exist with those of the Inuktitut sector.

In 2023-2024 at KI, 25% of Inuktitut sector teachers held a Quebec teaching license, while 39% of the English sector teachers and 59% of French sector teachers held one.

**The Commissioners discussed various complaints they received from KI employees and parents. They requested that information about existing mechanisms for filing a complaint be disseminated to the relevant audiences. Matters concerning the educational services students receive can for example be referred to the National Student Ombudsman, while KI employees can for example use institutional conflict resolution mechanisms.**

The Council emphasized that without the filing of a formal complaint, KI is often unaware of certain situations, and issues cannot be properly investigated or addressed.

More information on how to file a complaint with the National Student Ombudsman is available on the KI website: [www.kativik.qc.ca/en/student-ombudsman](http://www.kativik.qc.ca/en/student-ombudsman).

Additional information about KI policies on conflict prevention and resolution, as well as the resolution and prevention of psychological or sexual harassment in the workplace, can be found on our website under [Policies and Directives for the General Administration](#) (see ADM-14 and ADM-18).

**The Council was briefed on the work plan developed by the Director of Youth Sector Services for the department's three sectors of activity: 1) education services, 2) school operations and 3) complementary and compassionate services. The plan presented includes activities and deliverable related to curriculum development; professional development of educators; communications, effectiveness and efficiency, and continuous school improvement.**

As the department presented its activity report, the Commissioners emphasized the importance of providing adequate support for teachers, particularly given of the high staff turnover and the fact that less than half of the teaching personnel hold a Quebec teaching license across the three language sectors (41% in 2023-2024). In

this context, school visits by pedagogical counsellors are seen as a crucial activity to address this concern.

The issue of Inuktitut language courses for children under the care of Youth Protection Services (DYP) outside Nunavik was also raised by Commissioners. The Council learned that while collaboration with DYP has improved, no needs assessment has been conducted to determine the specific requirements for children to maintain their mother tongue. The Commissioners inquired whether more formal collaboration could be established between KI and Nunavimmi Ilagiit Papatauvinga.

**The Council of Commissioners was briefed on the conclusion of a research study on student retention and educational success conducted by ESUMA in the spring of 2023. Based on interviews with students and residents from the 14 Nunavik communities, the research examined key factors influencing school perseverance and provided recommendations for next steps.**

A total of 90 questionnaires were completed by Nunavik students, 24 interviews were conducted with parents, school personnel, officials and community members. Students were also invited to participate in 12 focus groups, and 8 community discussions were held via the local FM radio.

Along with data collected during these activities, the research also includes a literature review of studies conducted on Nunavik's youth, exploring their challenges, hopes, and expectations regarding educational programs and opportunities, culture transmission, identity, and self-actualization. The review highlighted that in many of the studies, the specific needs of boys have been overlooked.

The ESUMA research identifies the intermediate social context (family and community expectations, role models, support systems, etc.) and the educational system as the primary factors influencing school perseverance. The research emphasizes the importance of community collaboration and parental involvement. The data shows that academic and traditional knowledge are equally valued, with participants expressing the importance of culture transmission and land-based education for future generations. In this context, teacher retention within the school systems is a key issue, alongside the importance of tailoring the school curriculum to reflect shared local values.

**The Council of Commissioners was briefed on the summary of *Uvikkavut Qanuippat?* the first health survey conducted with students from all 14 Nunavik communities, by the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS). The summary provided a general overview of data dashboards on the demographics, physical health, lifestyle habits, social adaptation, and mental health of high school students.**

The Commissioners expressed interest in further discussions on how the data presented can inform decision-making at the school board.

Interestingly, some of the data presented overlaps with the findings of the 2023 ESUMA research, especially regarding the strong sense of pride in Inuit heritage among young Nunavimmiut in high school. Students reported having a positive family and community environment, with and nearly all expressing a desire to eat more traditional foods.

Regarding school perseverance and academic performance, most students reported working or having unpaid responsibilities at home during the school year, with some indicating that this led to skipping school. A majority of the students reported being subjected to violence on their way to school or in school, and having engaged in rebellious or delinquent behaviors. Despite these challenges, most high school students seem to appreciate school, and many hope to continue their education.

Finally, the research summary highlighted the importance of monitoring self-esteem, social skills, and mental health. While many students are optimistic about their ability to solve problems and face challenges, a few display symptoms of psychological distress that may impact their well-being, interpersonal relationship skills, and empathy.

**The Council of Commissioners approved a partnership agreement between KI and the Breakfast Club of Canada for the 2024-2025 school year. The program will support, enhance and strengthen breakfasts programs for students in schools across Nunavik.**

The purpose of this agreement is to support the delivery of a universal, sustainable, and high-quality breakfast program. The program will be available on all school days and open to all students who wish to participate.

This partnership agreement follows the publication of a notice of intent on the *Système électronique d'appel d'offres* (SEAO) in October 2024, aimed at identifying potential suppliers.

**The Council of Commissioners was briefed on the MEQ investigation report by MEQ Assistant Deputy Minister Marie-Josée Blais and her team. The report was presented to the Council in French and English, as Inuktitut translation has not been completed in time for the meeting. Pending the availability of the Inuktitut version, the Commissioners requested a follow-up meeting with the MEQ in March, to discuss next steps related to oversight mechanisms and the implementation of the recommendations.**

In October, the Commissioners were briefed on the recommendations of the investigations but did not have access to the full report.

At their December meeting, the Commissioners reviewed the full report but requested additional time for analysis once the Inuktitut translation was available. They also reiterated their wish for the report be publicly released by the MEQ in three languages (Inuktitut, English, French) on a mutually agreed-upon date.