

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE OCTOBER 2017 COUNCIL OF COMMISSIONERS

From October 17 to 19, the Council of Commissioners met in Akulivik. This meeting was the last one of the commissioners' current 3-year term. Elections are being held on November 15, in all Nunavik communities. You will find below an overview of the key issues discussed during that meeting.

Report from the financial auditors confirms that funds will be available for special projects

The school board currently has an accumulated surplus of \$16 M, out of which \$8 M is not committed. Over the next few years, the \$8 M that is not committed will be used to fund special projects based on priorities aligned with the school board's strategic plan.

Special projects will address non-recurring needs, as the surplus is not a sustainable source of funding.

Opening of a dialogue on education between the school board and Makivik

In response to an invitation from the Council of Commissioners, the Makivik Corporation President Jobie Tukkiapik presented the position of his organization on the need for an assessment of the Nunavik education system.

He stressed that the education audit called for earlier this year by Makivik should not be understood as a threat or interference in the school board's internal affairs or mandate. Instead, the objective is to get a comprehensive overview of where Nunavik stands in comparison with the rest of the province and other Aboriginal communities. Amongst elements requiring further research, Tukkiapik mentioned the link between education and the social issues affecting Nunavik communities, parental involvement and the language of instruction.

The Council of Commissioners welcomed the opportunity of a dialogue with Makivik. The President of the school board emphasized the importance of open communication and regular information exchange between Makivik and the school board. The Commissioners also reiterated the importance of ensuring the school board's involvement in discussions related to an audit of the Nunavik education system.

The general adult education reform: planning is underway with support from the Ministry of Education, and implementation should start in early 2018

The school board started to plan the implementation of the general adult education reform introduced in the province in 2009.

The reform puts forward a pedagogical approach based on the acquisition of competencies. This approach will replace the knowledge-based approach currently in place and will have a substantial impact on all the general education courses offered by the department.

The reform will not affect the vocational training courses offered by the department. The Ministry of Education has appointed a team to support the school board during the current planning phase. Extended support will also be made available by the Ministry of Education when the school board begins to implement the reform in early 2018.

The school board allocates additional resources to support students and mathematics teachers, with a focus on Secondary 4 and 5 students.

With the accreditation of the school board's Secondary 4 Mathematics and Science and Technologies programs by the Ministry of Education in July 2017, Nunavik students will now receive Secondary School Diplomas.

The Mathematics programs are now at par with the rest of the province. However, students have a gap in math competencies. To support them in meeting the learning expectations set forth by the ministry programs, the Council of Commissioners approved a Nunavik-wide tutorship program.

Challenges related to available housing are being resolved and program implementation is scheduled to start in November. The program foresees the deployment of specialized math tutors in all schools of Nunavik. Once in the communities, the tutors will provide direct support to students. They will also be available to provide assistance and expertise to teachers.

This year, our Secondary 5 students are facing a difficult situation. Passing the ministerial exam will be challenging and this should be clear to both parents and students. The current transition period is necessary for the next generations to take its place in today's global world. To ease this transition, the school board is allocating extra resources to support students. In addition to these resources, parental support is also essential.

The JUMP math program introduced this year at the primary level will enable our students to be fully prepared for the Ministry secondary level math exams. With the help of parental support, we expect that over time students' gap in math competencies will be reduced and eventually eliminated.

The language of instruction will be discussed by a special committee of the school board and by the Education Council at their upcoming meeting

The Commissioners discussed the impact of instruction in Inuktitut on the ability of students to succeed in their second language at a level equivalent to that of students from the rest of the province.

The discussion highlighted the fact that despite the school board's official position on the language of instruction, a strong consensus is lacking amongst the Commissioners.

Some members of the Council reiterated that the school board's decision to offer instruction entirely in Inuktitut from kindergarten to grade 3 is based on the research and findings of renowned linguists and scholars. Their findings have demonstrated that a well-acquired mother tongue provides a solid foundation that facilitates all learning. The curricula developed by the school board aim at making Inuktitut the foundation from which students engage into learning.

The President urged the Committee on the Language of Instruction to meet as soon as possible. She also asked that the committee maintain regular communication with the Makivik Corporation.

At its upcoming meeting from January 30 to February 1, 2018, the Education Council will also discuss the issue of language of instruction.

Serious delays in the approval of construction and renovation projects by the Ministry of Education is becoming a source of concern for the school board

During the current term of the Council of Commissioners, a total of 13 projects for school construction, school extension, housing construction were submitted to the Quebec Ministry of Education. Out of these, only 2 have been approved.

For the remaining 11 projects, the school board has received no communication from the Ministry of Education that would indicate when or if funding will be approved.

The 11 projects for which ministerial approval is pending include, for example: the construction of a high school in Inukjuak, the extension of Tukisiniarvik School in Akulivik, the construction of housing units for staff in Kuujjuaq, Akulivik, Aupaluk, Tasiujaq, Kangirsuk and Puvirnituk, and the relocation of the school board's Montreal offices to Nunavik.

The construction and renovation projects are prioritized, reviewed and approved by the Council of Commissioners based on a 10-year plan that reflects the current needs of Nunavik communities. However, as a result of these substantial ministerial approval delays, the needs of communities are becoming more pressing and severe.

The Commissioners expressed their concern with this situation. They demanded that steps be taken by the school board to lobby the government at higher levels and liaise with influential political counterparts.

These concerns were brought to the attention of the Prime Minister of Quebec during his visit to Kuujuaq on October 25, 2017.