

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE COUNCIL OF COMMISSIONERS HELD IN UMIUJAJQ, FROM OCTOBER 23 TO 25, 2018

The Council of Commissioners reiterates the need for the creation of a Nunavik language authority to oversee and support the enhancement and transmission of the Inuktitut language.

On October 23, Eyuka Pinguatug offered a 1-day training to the Commissioners, providing them with first-hand experience of content typically taught to Inuit teachers taking the Intermediate Inuktitut course as part of the teaching certification program offered in partnership with McGill University.

The training ended with an open conversation about the transmission and preservation of the Inuktitut language during which the Commissioners stressed:

- The importance of developing and offering Inuktitut language courses to second language learners (Inuit and non-Inuit).
- At the scale of Nunavik, there is a need for a language authority to enforce high-quality language standards and develop new terminology.
- In relation to work undertaken in 2014 under the leadership of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's task force "Atausiq Inuktitut Titirausiq", Nunavik needs to be kept abreast of progress made towards the introduction of a standardized Inuktitut writing system.

The Council of Commissioners reviewed and approved the Independent Auditor's report on the school board's financial statements.

This year again, the school board maintains a budgetary surplus. While comparable to last year, the surplus is lower due to benefits and salary increases paid to employees as per the 2015-2020 Collective Agreement signed at the end of the last school year.

As announced in June, the school board is making progress towards the implementation of a system that will allow Commissioners, managers and school administrators to access real-time data to inform decision-making at all levels of the organization.

The department of School Operations, with the support of the Information Technologies department, confirmed that the data management system DASH

is currently being put in place at the Kuujjuaq offices. It will also be installed at schools in Kuujjuaq, Kangiqsualujjuaq and Kangirsuk.

This first implementation phase will allow for adjustments and troubleshooting. The school board is working towards having DASH fully in place by the end of the school year. DASH will allow school administrators to input and immediately access school data without relying on internet access.

The Whapmagoostui First Nation government invited the school board to take part in a feasibility study for the construction and joint management of a learning centre, to be used by the Cree and the Inuit. The Commissioners requested additional time to consult locally and examine the details of the proposal before committing to this initiative.

The Commissioners received John Shem, Deputy Chief of the Whapmagoostui First Nation government. They expressed interest in the initiative he presented, but felt it would be important to consult their constituencies before agreeing on the allocation of resources to conduct a feasibility study.

Shem's presentation included:

- An overview of the goals of the feasibility study, deliverables, and related costs.
- A proposed governance structure for the Learning Centre, to ensure joint Cree and Inuit management as well as community ownership.
- A proposed educational mandate for the Learning Centre, rooted in practice and course offerings that would foster social responsibility as well as culture and language preservation.

After significant delays, the Quebec Ministry of Education finally cleared the backlog of approvals for construction projects submitted by the school board between 2014 and 2017. The Commissioners re-examined current infrastructure needs and approved a 5-year plan that will address local needs that have emerged over the past three years.

The 5-year plan has been submitted to the Ministry of Education for review and approval.

As it currently stands, the plan includes a number of school extensions (Akulivik, Quaqlaq, Tasiujaq, Kangiqsujuaq, Kuujjuaraapik, Puvirnituk and Kuujjuaq), heated bus garages, and the expansion of school board offices in Kuujjuaq, with housing units for staff in many communities.

Teacher training courses are being reviewed and assessed to ensure that the changing needs of Nunavik teachers are met. While this process is ongoing, UQAT will continue to offer courses and McGill courses will be paused until a Teacher Training Coordinator is hired by the school board.

The Teacher Training program in Nunavik is currently offered in partnership with McGill and UQAT.

The school board's partnership with McGill celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. In the communities of Puvirnituk and Ivujivik, courses have been offered through UQAT for 30 years.

These two universities have successfully supported and trained Nunavik's educators. However, in recent years, concerns have been raised about the length of time required for teachers to complete their certification.

In addition, an initial assessment found that the certifications received through the McGill and UQAT partnerships are not recognized outside of the school board's jurisdiction, which limits the professional mobility of Inuit teachers holding these certifications.

With the objective to offer the best possible programs to our teachers, an evaluation of the Teacher Training programs was commissioned by the Council of Commissioners in early 2018.

Commissioners would like to see more information on the impact of cannabis and stressed the importance of raising youth awareness.

The school board is represented by the Commissioner of Quaqtuaq, Sarah Aloupa, on a joint committee on the legalization of cannabis. A first meeting was held, but so far regional awareness campaigns have not been discussed.

The Commissioners expressed strong support for the emergency meeting on the Nunavik suicide crisis called for by the school board.

The emergency meeting was held one week after the Council of Commissioners meeting, on October 30-31, in Kuujjuaq. It brought together over 75 stakeholders and created momentum, inspiring participants to work together locally on improving the services and safety network offered to the youth.

Representatives from the following government agencies were present: Ministry of Health and Social Services, Ministry of Education, Office of the

Coroner and the *Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones*. Key conclusions from the meeting have yet to be communicated to participants.

Concerned with bullying, the Commissioners encouraged schools to recruit local school bus monitors. They also acknowledged the measures put in place by schools in order to address recurring class closures and the shortage of teachers.

The department of School Operations and the Human Resources department provided an update on the shortage of teachers. As of mid-October, 14 second languages teaching positions were vacant, in addition to 15 positions of Inuktitut and culture teachers.

Some schools have successfully recruited teachers and trainees new to the profession. Education Services in cooperation with School Operations developed a referral system which enables these teachers to rapidly access support from pedagogical counsellors.

Currently, school administrators are using numerous solutions to cope with lack of teachers. These include: hire substitutes locally as much as possible, merge classrooms, use teacher-hours to a maximum and working with the Fondation Paul Gérin-Lajoie to train and support local substitute teachers.

Since August, funds are available for schools to hire school bus monitors with training as requested, and some schools have already moved ahead with recruitment. The presence of school bus monitors can play a positive role in reducing bullying.

Commissioners expressed concerns with the lack of Education Committee involvement and decision-making power in the hiring of teachers. The Commissioners requested a review of Education Committee procedures to clarify the role of these committees in the hiring process.