

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. Annual General Meeting Members Push for Governments to Implement Article 23 of the Nunavut Agreement, Increase Inuit Post Secondary Funding, and Provide More Support to Inuit to Tackle High Cost of Living

(October 26, 2023, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut) The annual general meeting of the Members of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) concluded in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut today with important decisions made that will have positive impacts for Nunavut Inuit. The AGM was hosted over three days with representatives from each of the Regional Inuit Associations and NTI making up the delegates.

Cost of not Successfully Implementing Article 23.

The Members of the AGM were presented with the results of an economic study commissioned by NTI to look at financial loss to Inuit and governments resulting from failure to implement Article 23 of the *Nunavut Agreement*. Article 23 obligates government to employ Inuit at all levels of government at the rate that is representative of the population of the Territory in any given year. Since 1999, the Inuit employment rate has never gone above 52%. The study took data from Statistics Canada and government employment reports and did a comparison of what a fully represented Inuit employment public service would look like.

The results showed that over the period of 2015 to 2023, there would be an accumulation of lost wages for Nunavut Inuit totaling over \$1.4 billion. The data also showed increased costs to government for housing subsidies, employment insurance and income assistance combined with a loss in tax revenue, at a total of \$630 million during the same time period.

The study clearly shows that implementing Article 23 will result in huge financial gains for Inuit and that a large investment in training for Inuit will lead to long-term gains for governments and, in turn, for all Canadians.

As a result of the continued lack of Inuit employment, NTI initiated arbitration in 2018 against the governments of Nunavut and Canada concerning the implementation of Article 23. The

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dispute was whether governments' Inuit employment plans were in accordance with the obligations of Article 23. The arbitrator ruled in favour of NTI and determined that the two governments' Inuit employment plans are in breach of the *Nunavut Agreement*. In addition, the governments adopted a narrow and ungenerous approach to the relevant language of the *Nunavut Agreement* and does not take into consideration key overall objectives of the Agreement.

Because the decision concludes that the Government of Canada (GoC) and the Government of Nunavut (GN) breached Article 23, the parties have moved to a "remedies" stage. Remedies can include monetary and non-monetary damages. NTI is negotiating with both governments to reach mutually agreeable remedies to address the breach of Article 23. If the parties cannot agree on a settlement, it will be necessary for NTI to prepare for a remedies hearing before the arbitrator.

The Members of the AGM responded with a call on all governments to fully implement the *Nunavut Agreement* and 2015 Settlement Agreement and through robust statutory, regulatory, policy and program measures to make substantial, steady and measurable progress towards achieving representative Inuit employment at all levels in Nunavut; and for governments to examine structures, processes and procedures related to the recruitment, retention, promotion and training of Inuit, and to eliminate all barriers that are inconsistent with the spirit or letter of Article 23.

Further, the Members called on the GoC to increase its funding for the Inuit Post Secondary Education Initiative (IPSE). NTI was allocated approximately \$65 million or 48% of the fund for the IPSE Initiative from Indigenous Services Canada through Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and is working with the three Regional Inuit Associations in Nunavut as the Regional Delivery Agents of the program. The program has been experiencing significant growth in enrolment since its inception, with demands outpacing the estimates put forward in the 2018 funding proposal, resulting in a \$20.4 million shortfall for the four-year period of 2023-2027. NTI has been working with other Inuit regions and ITK to advocate for additional funding to address the shortfall.

NTI's Audited Financial Statement Approved

NTI's financial capacity to deliver programs that directly benefit Inuit has tremendously improved, as evidenced by a doubling of NTI's assets and cash resources to \$686.6 million over last year. The increase of \$341 million was largely driven by new federal funding for housing and infrastructure and a 20% increase in NTI's core funding. In addition to housing and infrastructure, over the years, NTI has seen welcome increases in other federal program funding.

Although a significant amount of the funding was received close to year-end, NTI was able to direct the funding to Inuit-specific programs and services, resulting in a 53% increase in spending when compared to last year. Since 2019, program spending has more than

quadrupled from \$31.8 million to \$157.7 million during 2022-23 through targeted investments in health, social, educational, housing and infrastructure programs.

The Members of the AGM also passed Resolutions calling on the governments to take action on several areas of priorities including:

Addictions and Trauma Treatment Support: The Members called on the GN to prioritize addictions and trauma treatment and support programs in Nunavut, including the planning and construction of additional addictions and trauma treatment centres at both regional and community levels in Nunavut as well as training Inuktitut-speaking counsellors and Community Social Services Workers; as an interim measure, to make more long-term counsellors and Community Social Services Workers available in the communities including in schools; and to delay the opening of additional beer and wine stores in Nunavut until there are suitable treatment options available to Nunavut Inuit.

Elder Care Facilities: The Members have passed several resolutions in recent AGMs calling on the GN to increase the number of Elder care and long-term care facilities in Nunavut communities. While the Members commend the GN's efforts to date on constructing Elder care facilities in Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay, the Members called on the GN to work with Inuit Organizations to establish and maintain an adequate number of Elder care facilities in Nunavut, including in the smaller communities; to advocate for adequate, long-term funding sources; to ensure that Elders receive an adequate and respectable level of care within their homeland; and to ensure that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is incorporated in all aspects of the operations of Elder care facilities and that Elders receive care in Inuktitut.

High Cost of Living: The cost of everyday living, including the basic necessities such as housing and food, is prohibitively high in Nunavut. The Members called on the GoC and the GN to take immediate actions to combat the high cost of living in Nunavut, including, without limitation, increasing income support payments and providing more support to harvesters.

The high food price is exacerbated by the fact that more than half of the \$131-million annual Nutrition North subsidy paid directly to grocery retailers serving over 120 remote northern communities from Labrador to Yukon is reportedly pocketed by the retailers instead of being passed on to consumers as required by the program. The Members called on the GoC to audit the Nutrition North subsidy program and to enhance monitoring and enforcement mechanism to ensure the annual Nutrition North subsidy is fully passed on to Inuit.

The Indigenous Community Support Fund (ICSF) provided by the GoC during the COVID-19 pandemic and administered by the Inuit Organizations had provided significant relief for Inuit. The Members called on the GoC to continue providing Indigenous Community Support Fund or an alternative or equivalent minimum income program, as a permanent or pilot program to combat poverty in Nunavut.

Wildlife Management and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) has not been sufficiently used in wildlife management processes in Nunavut, as required under the *Nunavut Agreement*, sometimes resulting in poor decisions that affect Inuit. The Members called on the GoC, the GN, the Institutions of Public Government, and other relevant bodies to recognize the central role of IQ in wildlife management in Nunavut, and to work closely with Inuit to ensure the full inclusion and reflection of IQ in all decisions affecting wildlife.

Support for Inuit Harvesters: The high cost of gasoline and basic harvesting equipment is a significant barrier for many Inuit to participate in harvesting activities, and the recent surge in cost of living in Canada has further reduced Inuit harvesters' ability to engage in harvesting activities, which may lead to poorer nutrition, poorer physical and mental health, and a lower quality of life in Inuit communities. The Members called on the GoC and the GN to work with Inuit Organizations to examine the existing regulatory, policy and financial barriers for Inuit harvesters, and to make systemic improvements to support harvesting economy that may include, without limitation, employment insurance eligibility, tax exemption and rebate for gasoline and harvesting equipment, and entitlement to leave from employment.

The next AGM is scheduled for October 22-24, 2024 in Iqaluit, Nunavut.

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