NTI Statement regarding the Declaration of a Public Health Emergency

Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) applauds the decision by the territorial Chief Public Health Officer to declare a public health emergency in Nunavut in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government of Canada must acknowledge and address Nunavut's vulnerability to the COVID-19 pandemic by addressing the immediate risks, as well as persistent social and economic inequities faced by Nunavut Inuit which put Inuit at elevated risk.

Many Inuit are unable to take the most basic protective measures recommended by Canada's Chief Public Health Officer. Public health information has not been effectively distributed in Inuktut, the majority language of the territory. In overcrowded homes, many Inuit are unable to distance socially and will not be able to self-isolate or quarantine. Similarly, many Inuit do not receive water and sewer services daily making handwashing difficult.

Chronic shortages of health care staff, inadequate health infrastructure, persistent food insecurity and a vulnerable supply chain into the territory would make a COVID-19 outbreak in Nunavut devastating.

Nunavut Inuit are strongly encouraged to do as much as they can to follow the instructions by the territorial Chief Public Health Officer, which includes: staying home, washing hands often, do not kunik children, and do not chew food for infants. For up to date instructions, visit www.gov.nu.ca.

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For more information, please contact:

Malaya Mikijuk
A/ Director of Communications
Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
Tel: (867) 975-4900
mmikijuk@tunngavik.com
https://www.tunngavik.com

Qajaaq Ellsworth
Senior Communications Advisor
Office of President Aluki Kotierk
Tel: (867) 222.3939
qellsworth@tunngavik.com
https://www.president.tunngavik.com