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Comité consultatif de l'environnement Kativik
Kativik Environmental Advisory Committee

December 19, 2025

Patrick Lahaie
Associate Secretary General for First Nations and Inuit Relations
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Quebec City, QC
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Caroline Quach-Thanh
Assistant Deputy Minister and National Director of Public Health
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Quebec City, QC
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Subject: Creation of a working group on drinking water in Nunavik

Dear Mr. Lahaie and Ms. Quach-Thanh,

The Kativik Environmental Advisory Committee (KEAC) was established under Section 23 of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA). It is the official forum for the governments responsible for developing laws, regulations, and policies concerning the protection of the environment and the social environment in the territory governed by the JBNQA and located north of the 55th parallel. Under section 23.5.26 of the JBNQA, the KEAC shall review procedures relating to land use that could affect the rights of the Inuit, Naskapi and Cree established under Chapter 24, and can propose changes to responsible governments where appropriate. Under article 23.5.28, the committee issues opinions on matters of major importance in the region.

Many households and communities in Nunavik struggle with aging, unreliable water systems, frequent boil water advisories, and poor infrastructure, which pose serious public health risks. Reliable access to clean water is vital for survival, health and community well-being. As stated in the preamble of the *Act to affirm the collective nature of water resources and to promote better governance of water and associated environments*, water is indispensable to life and water must be accessible in the quantity and quality required to meet every individual's essential needs. These conditions are not currently met in Nunavik.

The KEAC has been concerned about the issue of reliable access to drinking water in Nunavik communities for decades. In 1999, a joint commission between the Bureau d'audience publique sur l'environnement (Public Hearings Office on the Environment, BAPE) and the KEAC was created to ensure that consultations on water management in Quebec adequately considered the specificities of Nunavik. Even at that time, the joint commission's report emphasized

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that “drinking water supply is a major issue for Inuit communities.”¹ Nearly two decades later, the importance and severity of this issue have remained the same. There are increasing reports of schools having to close because they lack water², CLSCs unable to meet basic hygiene standards³, and the spread of infectious diseases in communities due to the inability to access a stable supply of drinking water⁴. Earlier this year, the community of Puvirnituk had to declare a state of emergency to deal with a water shortage caused, among other things, by the freezing of their water supply line. Hospital patients and residents of the long-term care centre had to be evacuated to Montreal in response to this issue⁵.

At its 185th meeting, held in Kuujuaapik on September 24 and 25, 2025, the KEAC welcomed the Kativik Regional Government’s (KRG) municipal public works team, who presented their drinking water management policy and the resources required to treat and distribute drinking water in Nunavik. The presentation highlighted the complexity of water management in the region, where the specific characteristics of each northern village require a tailored approach and customized solutions.

In recent months, the KEAC has completed a portrait of water governance in the region⁶. This document highlights the multiplicity of stakeholders and regulatory and legislative frameworks involved in drinking water management in Nunavik, and the resulting complexity. In this context, the KEAC believes it is necessary to create a space for discussion and exchange among responsible bodies, aimed at identifying sustainable solutions so that Nunavimmiut have consistent access to drinking water in sufficient quantity and quality to meet their basic needs in a reliable manner. The KEAC therefore recommends the creation of a working group composed of all stakeholders who must act on drinking water issues in Nunavik by identifying the main obstacles for accessing drinking water in communities and, above all, identify appropriate, realistic solutions and funding.

We thank you for your attention to these recommendations, issued pursuant to articles 23.5.26 and 23.5.28 of the JBNQA. The KEAC would like to be informed of the steps that will be taken to address this issue.

Best regards,



Michael Barrett
Chairperson, KEAC

c.c:

Frédéric Guay, Provincial Administrator of Section 23 of the JBNQA

¹ BAPE, 2000. L'eau, ressource à protéger, à partager et à mettre en valeur, Tome I. Rapport de la commission sur la gestion de l'eau au Nunavik. Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 933 pages. (in French only)

²<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/lack-of-clean-water-nunavik-impact-on-schools-1.6599534>

³ <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/water-shortages-at-inukjuak-clinic-compromise-quality-of-care-quebec-ombudsman/>

⁴ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/puvirnituk-water-frozen-pipe-illness-1.7535826>

⁵Nunatsiaq, May 18, 2025. Puvirnituk declares state of emergency over water shortage

<https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/puvirnituk-declares-state-of-emergency-over-water-shortage/>

⁶ [QuiFaitQuoiNunavik_EN.pdf](#)